

ANTHONY EDEN



ANTHONY EDEN

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A BIOGRAPHY

ALAN CAMPBELL JOHNSON

Author of "Peace Offering," etc.



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PREFACE

I TO WRITE the biography of a living man is to invite ridicule and even obloquy, but for attempting to summarize and interpret some of the principal facts and factors in the first forty-three years of Anthony Eden's career there is perhaps more than the customary excuse. The astonishing thing is that although by early middle age his name is a household word, the story of how he stormed the heights of world renown is almost entirely unknown. It is tucked away in the endless columns of Hansard and the dusty files of local newspapers.

Anthony Eden arrived on the world scene with the emergence of the National Government. He has been there ever since, but of his antecedents no questions were asked. The public did not demand a reference. Instead, finding him politically sincere, physically attractive and socially beyond reproach, it conferred on him a testimonial from its own immediate impressions. Whereas Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Joseph Stalin have had to use all the resources of their respective states to build up legends about themselves, the legend of Anthony Eden is a thing at once as simple and mysterious as a classic fairy story.

But Eden's period of power already belongs to history. Alternative forces and fresh facts have already swept away much of his work. Yet he symbolizes still an aspiration in international government and method which the peoples of Great Britain and the world at large cannot finally avoid.

He is still the greatest threat to the forces of reaction in this country. And the signs are that the remaining years of Anthony Eden's allotted span will see the causes he championed taken up with renewed zeal. This book has been written under the shadow of recurring crises, culminating in the reprieve of Munich. Spokesmen of all parties and persuasions are agreed that the four statesmen who met at

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the Führerhaus had behind them the compelling authority of their respective peoples to find a formula of peace. The allegiance of Europe could not be guaranteed for war. If this is true, there has been a profound advance in the fitful influence of public opinion over government. The lesson of 1914-18 may perhaps have been learned by the peoples of the West, in spite of their rulers.

The immediate lesson of Munich is a shameful betrayal of perhaps the most up-to-date and scientific of all democracies—tyranny triumphing by exploiting the technique of reason. But the deeper meaning is peace standing above and beyond all parties and causes—peace has been preserved at the eleventh hour, when every cause seemed lost, and the great nations are unable to conceal their immediate instinctive rejoicings. At the moment it is no more than that—a negative peace. Peace with dishonour, but it provides the work Anthony Eden has done, and has yet to do, with a new challenge. Time is on his side; even if the processes of justice are slow, and of international justice, slower still.

The story this book attempts to unfold is not so much a biography as an informal record of a premature experiment in international collaboration, of which the first half of Eden's life was but an incident. Yet there is more to it than that, for Eden represents a new generation in British politics. He has held and given up great office in a time when party systems and loyalties are undermined by stronger issues—a new electorate is waiting for his word.

If his task is to be resumed a purpose is served perhaps by using the breathing space his resignation provides to describe his political career and antecedents, and to select from his crowded life the actions and the words that have earned him the reputation generously defined by Mr. Churchill of being 'the one fresh figure of the first magnitude arising out of the generation ravaged by the war'. If, then, this book helps in some small way to convey the importance of Anthony Eden in terms of his potential influence for the

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future of his country, its purpose will have been amply served.

Chapters II and III and parts of Chapters XV and XX are based almost entirely on material supplied to me by Mr. Richard Pennington, librarian of the National Liberal Club, but without his assistance and advice throughout this book could hardly have been completed. I wish to acknowledge, also, the courteous services of his staff, which have been at my disposal the whole time.

For a section of Chapter III, and for help on research, I must couple the name of Mr. A. K. Milne with that of Mr. Pennington.

In estimating certain phases of Eden's career I have received invaluable advice from a number of distinguished men who, in one way or another, are in a position to supply first-hand and authentic opinions. In particular I wish to thank Viscount Cecil and Mr. Godfrey Locker-Lampson for their kindness in allowing me to discuss with them questions arising out of the manuscript. Finally I must pay tribute to my wife, who, patiently typing and revising my MS. during the past seven months, has had ample opportunity to reflect on the trials and tribulations connected with authorship.

There are numerous quotations throughout this book chiefly from the relevant *Survey of International Affairs*, *Annual Register*, and *The Times*. Page or date references have been given only where I have felt that the quotations or contexts are of sufficient importance in their bearing on Eden to merit the reader's further scrutiny. I have also made constant reference to *Places in the Sun*, published by John Murray.

ALAN CAMPBELL JOHNSON

WESTMINSTER, November 1938

Chapter I



OTHER EDENS

GREAT BRITAIN is ruled by oligarchies. We are not so much a nation of shopkeepers as of petty dynasts. In the archives of a few great country houses will be found abundant material of unbroken succession to the thrones of Parliamentary office and Imperial authority. The centuries come and go; each generation offering its unique contribution to the treasure-house of our history, but over and above obvious and inevitable change there is an overwhelming continuity. The causes disappear, the leadership recurs. Consider the names that dominate our public life to-day. The House of Stanley is at the helm of Industry and Empire; the House of Cecil still wields its gigantic influence over Foreign Policy; a Castlereagh, a Zetland, and a Halifax are strongly represented. 'The stout honest homespun' of Stanley Baldwin is nothing other than a souvenir of Norman Conquest. The genius of a Churchill still holds aloft the banners of the mighty Marlborough, but it must not be imagined that the long traditions of public service these names call to mind is in any way comparable to the history of the Samurai in Japan.

Ours is no blatant rigid or formal system of aristocratic supremacy. The privileges and responsibilities are assumed as belonging to the order of things. Self-consciousness or even self-assertion are for the most part absent from the stately homes of England. There have been notable exceptions, of course—Curzon for one; but Curzon's vanity was Roman, not British; tracing its descent it would seem from Cicero's notorious egotism. Foreigners are not perhaps prepared to admit this distinction, and from experience are no doubt tempted to conclude that *milord* as a rule is—in his

own terms—‘damned arrogant’. But to dismiss our aristocracy as incomprehensible and generally intolerable is to close the back-door to international understanding. Perfidious Albion does not tally with the complicated records of our great families by whom Albion’s policy has in fact been deeply influenced and accordingly in whom most of the perfidy must reside.

Take the life and connexions of any British Governor-General and you will find it easy enough to visit upon him sins of omission and lethargy, a distorted sense of values in this instance, mistimed initiative in that, but over and above particular blunders and even crimes there remains a certain constitutional instinct amounting almost to imperial ethic, a rare quality of strength and justice which seems by now to have become a common inheritance, and yet I know of very few British governors or statesmen who would have succeeded where Pontius Pilate failed—good intentions will continue to be ill-informed and misunderstood. Barabbas will once again be released.

.

Research into a particular family will repay the student with unique personal material, but if the net is widened the general standard will soon emerge. Whether the seed be Coke of Norfolk, Reresby of the Ridings, the Grenvilles of Cornwall, although they may flower into clashing loyalties, the roots of behaviour and of service are interwoven. Geography has played its part, of course. There is a tradition of rugged independence still associated with the Counties Palatine—and the evidence of history would amply bear out that it is no accident that a British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, having risen to that exalted office by the age of thirty-eight, having sustained it during two of the most critical years in the history of this nation, having laid it aside because of his inflexible resolve to put the interest of the State before the unity of the Cabinet,

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should prove to be a Durham man—the direct descendant of a great Durham family.

‘I am certain in my own mind that progress depends above all on the temper of the nation, and that temper must find expression in a firm spirit. That spirit, I am confident, is there. Not to give voice to it is, I believe, fair neither to this country nor to the world.’ In these decisive words, free of any flamboyant personal gesture, Robert Anthony Eden was giving highest expression to what, without in any way impinging on Sir Charles Petrie’s estimate of the House of Chamberlain, may perhaps be most adequately summarized as the Eden tradition.

It is a pious formula of biography that the hero’s life and work should be decorously prefaced with an annoying aggregate of obscure relations. The reader is at once involved in the author’s laborious and thoughtless irrelevance, but in the case of Anthony Eden to avoid his ancestry is to miss much of his significance. The name of Eden is in fact inextricably bound up with the history of our great families. Marriage has at various times linked them to some of the oldest houses in the kingdom—to the Widdingtons, the Sheffields, the Veres, the Kenes, and the Fairfaxes. The Baronetcy was originally conferred by Charles II in 1672; but no figure of outstanding distinction emerges until we come to William Eden, first Baron Auckland. His was a career of widespread public service and success. Born in 1744 the third son of the third baronet, his path to glory was the familiar Eton, Christ Church (with academic honours) and Middle Temple. At twenty-eight his pamphlet ‘The Principles of Penal Law’ was published, and in the same year he was appointed to the office of Under-Secretary of State. The pamphlet drew attention to the disgraceful conditions prevailing under an outworn penal code, creating a sensation extending well beyond the confines of this country, and providing an impetus and an excuse for much of the reform that followed on it. In the

same year he left law for the wider paths of politics, in which, as he wrote to the future Lord Loughborough, 'I have no experience. I know nothing of it with certainty except that many have lost their way in it.' He had no illusion about the cares of office: 'I am aware too of the daily confinement and regular attendance at the office, of the affected reserve which a man must adopt on all subjects whether ignorant or otherwise, and lastly of the hourly necessity of giving disagreeable answers both to reasonable and unreasonable requests.' He accepted an Under-Secretaryship of State under Lord Suffolk, and afterwards became M.P. for Woodstock. He rapidly gained a reputation for knowledge in legal and economic questions, and spoke frequently with increasing authority in the House on these subjects. Promotion was rapid: he was selected as one of the First Lords of the Board of Trade and Plantations, and remained in that capacity until his duties were abolished and transferred to a committee of the Privy Council in 1782.

His zeal for penal reform and the mitigation of harsh laws found practical expression in his support for the great Act of 1778 directed to those ends and in a remarkable speech advocating the substitution of hard labour for transportation. His controversial powers were displayed in four remarkable letters to the Earl of Carlisle, published towards the end of 1779. These letters show Eden as a courageous Free Trader, the aristocratic radical who put the claims of personal integrity and detachment before mere loyalty to Party machines. Indeed 'The Circumstances of War' and 'The Spirit of Party' have a particular relevance to-day.

In 1778 he went to America as one of five Commissioners in an abortive attempt to settle the disturbances there: 1780 saw him in Ireland as Chief Secretary. It was an anxious period following the Gordon riots in London and the secession of the American Colonies, and his fiscal and economic measures, which included a limited amount of

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Free Trade, and the establishment of a National Bank of Ireland showed to the full the efficacy of conciliatory strength. In 1784 as chairman of the committee examining the East India Company he was responsible for recommendations that found their way into several great Parliamentary measures.

It is with the return of Pitt after the downfall of the Fox-North coalition that Eden's career grows to its full stature and is closely identified with Pitt's mighty programme of financial reforms, the corner-stone of which was the commercial treaty with France. It was Eden whom Pitt sent as special envoy to Versailles in 1785. 'Difficult and intricate' is the description of the negotiations in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, for although Eden found a France seething with spacious ideas, and although he had all through the good wishes of the physiocrats and the advanced political theorists who advocated Free Trade, the application of those ideas to particular measures was for the most part overlooked, and the feeble ministers of the dying *ancien régime* had neither the courage nor the convictions to carry through comprehensive settlements. However, on September 26, 1786, this great labour was successfully sealed and completed.

'In 1787', writes his pious son, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, in a preface to his *Journals and Correspondence*, 'Mr. Eden had the most arduous duties to perform. He concluded a treaty respecting the East Indies in which for the first time our rights of sovereignty were acknowledged by the French Government. He also by his conciliatory conduct and the influence which he had gained at the Court of Versailles mainly contributed to the prevention of a war with respect to the affairs of Holland.' Pitt was delighted at the success of his minister—was lavish with praise for his diplomatic resource. The sort of atmosphere in which the diligent Eden had to work can be seen in the following extract from the *Morning Post* of October 20, 1787 (exactly a

hundred and fifty years before another Mr. Eden was attempting to smooth out incompatible claims): 'It was reported so long ago as on Monday evening last that dispatches were received from Mr. Eden containing the result of what had passed between him and the French ministers. They stated that the preparations for war were going on in every quarter of the French Dominions with as much zeal and activity as had been shown in England itself. An answer has been returned to this, requiring positive declarations concerning the present view of that court (the French) with such demands on our part as are said will be impossible to comply with.'

In the same year and in the course of the same negotiations William Eden was closely identified with the problem of Non-Intervention. On this occasion the object was to save Holland from the attentions of France, and to obtain from the French Minister, De Montmorin, the declaration that the French Government had not and never had the intention of interfering with an armed force in the affairs of Holland. De Montmorin played his part in providing a precedent for 1938. First, by demanding the withdrawal of Prussian troops before discussing the Dutch situation, and, secondly, by putting forward the bland assurance that no French troops had ever entered Holland.

In 1788 the importance of Eden first made itself felt in Spain, for in that year William Eden was sent there as ambassador, once again to direct and appease warlike preparations. 'Spain', we are told, 'is arming with as much expedition as the nature of that sluggish people will allow them to do'. Return from Spain brought promotion to an Irish peerage. In 1789 he was appointed ambassador to Holland, and in the following years when war between Spain and this country seemed inevitable, negotiated successfully for Dutch assistance. Also in 1790 he concluded and signed the great convention between the Austrian Empire, Prussia, Great Britain, and the United Provinces

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on the security and status of the Netherlands. Throughout the critical years of 1791 to 1793 the French armies of revolution dismayed Europe, and Eden remained at The Hague watching over British interests and policy when the social order of the world seemed to be falling asunder. But with the temporary passing of the storm from the Low Countries, Auckland's official diplomatic career came to an end.

During the next seven momentous years, however, he exercised a powerful influence over Pitt as a confidential adviser. Pitt was reported to be in love with Auckland's eldest daughter, and the known intimacy of the two families attracted a great deal of notice to a pamphlet by Auckland on 'The Apparent Circumstances of the War', which was supposed to embody Pitt's personal opinions. In the end the relations between the two men became increasingly strained. Auckland refused to take office when Pitt was returned to power in 1804.

In 1806 he entered Grenville's administration as President of the Board of Trade, resigning in the following year for the last time. It is interesting to note once again in view of present events that one of his last public acts was to draw up with Lord Holland 'an official paper which contained commercial stipulations framed on the fairest and most liberal principles of reciprocal advantage and utility to this country and the United States'. 'In private life', his son concludes, 'he was acknowledged on all sides to be a most agreeable companion and a most amiable man; though he left a very great number of his letters behind him, both political and social, scarcely is any remark to be found in them which would give pain to the most vehement of his political opposers or to any other persons known to him'.

Anthony Eden was to take after his distinguished ancestor, not only in intellectual versatility, but also in good looks. A portrait of him in his prime shows the first Lord Auckland as a man of slim physique and features regular but not

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typical, strong but not aggressive—in short, as a well-moulded man of fashion.

The services and influence of the House of Eden were not confined to the first Lord Auckland—brothers, nephews, sons, and daughters all helped to add lustre to the name. Of his brothers, the eldest, Sir John Eden was M.P. for Durham in two Parliaments; the second, Sir Robert Eden became Governor of Maryland—which brought with it a baronetcy, and his marriage to Caroline Calvert conferred on all his descendants the peculiar status of Counts and Countesses of the Holy Roman Empire. This title belongs to all his legitimate descendants. So if ever Otto and the Habsburgs are restored and the old world called into existence to redress the balance of the new, Anthony Eden would once again be faced with the dilemma not wholly unknown to him of a double allegiance.

Lord Auckland's youngest brother, Morton Eden (first Baron Henley), also chose diplomacy for his career. If diplomacy is to-day the *métier* of the privileged, it was much more so at the end of the eighteenth century. When we read, therefore, in the *D.N.B.* that Morton Eden 'matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, 13th July 1770, took no degree and at the age of twenty-four entered upon a diplomatic career' the influence of his family name will be readily appreciated. He was at once appointed Minister to the Elector of Bavaria, in which capacity he gave such satisfaction that at twenty-seven he was transferred to Copenhagen as Envoy Extraordinary. Office and reward were his in abundance. Minister at Berlin, ambassador at Vienna and at Madrid, he played a part fully as valuable as his brothers in maintaining the integrity and strength of British foreign policy during a time of grave peril, not merely to our interests but to our very existence. 'England has saved herself through her exertions and Europe through her example'—if history has confirmed Pitt's famous claim, no small share of the credit belongs to these two Edens.

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We have noted Lord Auckland's painstaking efforts in the cause of penal reform, but a nephew of his, Sir Frederick Morton Eden, was to produce a book *The State of the Poor* (one of the great classics of economic literature), which, as the outcome of intense and disinterested research, was to revolutionize opinion on the subject of poverty. Before Eden's time public *malaise* limited itself to noting the obvious failures of the various enlightened Poor Law Acts and to drawing the conclusion that the poor were for the most part incorrigible. Even that apostle of human rights, John Locke, was forced to the conclusion that the growth of the poor can be the outcome of 'nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and the corruption of manners.' Eden's analysis of fact and theory and his general scientific method destroyed these glib assertions. It is not known how he was induced originally to undertake his great task. His editor points out 'there is nothing to indicate that the author was led to conduct his investigations by the influence of any person, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that he might have been attracted to the subject by the known reputation of his relation as an authority on legal and economic questions and by a desire to emulate his fame'. It is sufficient to say that the quality of the work helps to explain, if not to vindicate, the prestige and dominance not only of the Edens but of their class as well. The independence of judgment that characterizes Lord Auckland's correspondence with his political chief, William Pitt, is to be found equally in Morton Eden's attitude to his economic master, Adam Smith. Although he is a staunch champion of individual rights, attacking severe and repressive measures, yet he does not allow his admiration to outweigh his judgment, and Adam Smith's wholesale condemnation of the law of settlements is dismissed as 'too highly coloured'.

Idealism is a strong Eden tradition, but a capacity to translate faith into works is equally formidable. This quiet detached scholar, advocating in 1797 the widespread

development of friendly societies to alleviate distress, was to put his theories to the test by founding and subsequently becoming chairman of the Globe Insurance Company. His treatise, which he wrote when he was only thirty-one and which was published three years before Malthus' *Essay on Population*, is a landmark in the history of economic and statistical inquiry—a work of such glaring merit that the cantankerous Karl Marx was moved to mention its author in *Das Kapital* 'as the only disciple of Adam Smith during the eighteenth century that produced any work of importance'. Such praise from such an authority might well have provided Stalin with a feeling of hereditary comradeship for Baldwin's aristocratic young envoy when they met in Moscow.

Sir Frederick did not confine himself to economic research. His 'cultivated and scholarly mind' found expression in various literary efforts. He was responsible for *The Vision*, a humorous satire on the activities of a well-known divine and friend of his, Jonathan Bouchier, and (anonymously) for a long poem in Latin hexameters entitled 'Brontës: a Cento to the memory of the late Viscount Nelson, Duke of Brontë, 1806.'

In the career of the first Lord Auckland's second son the family's steady devotion to public service is continued, although on a larger scale. The journey to politics, as always, was Christ Church and the Bar, but his entrance into Parliament followed on his father's severance from Pitt and the Tories. As his biographer points out, the second Lord Auckland had thus imbibed Whig ideas. During the dim days of reaction following Waterloo he voted and spoke indefatigably for the Whig opposition to the Lord Liverpool Administration. The reward came in 1830 when Grey appointed him President of the Board of Trade in his Reform Cabinet. Between 1830 and 1835 he was in and out

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of office, acting for a short time as First Lord of the Admiralty. But in September 1835 Melbourne revoked Peel's nomination of Lord Heytesbury for Governor-General of India and recommended Lord Auckland to be Lord William Bentinck's successor. The real achievement of Auckland's governorship has been obscured by the dramatic military success and failure arising out of his disastrous Afghan policy. The failure to judge aright the respective characters and claims of Shah Shuja and Dost Muhammad, or even to take the advice of the omniscient Wellington, who pointed out at the time that 'the consequence of crossing the Indus once to settle a government in Afghanistan will be a perennial march into that country', should not blind us to his humane ideals and administrative vision.

The keynote of his aim he said, in a speech at a farewell banquet given in his honour by the Governors, was 'exultation at the opportunity afforded of doing good to his fellow-creatures, of promoting education and knowledge, of improving the justice in India, of extending the blessings of good government and happiness to millions of her people'. As his biographer aptly adds, 'these phrases had not then lost their novelty'. One prominent contemporary summed up Auckland as being 'with the sole exception of Lord John Russell, by far the ablest member of his party. His views most statesmanlike, and his government of India particularly just.' The spiteful Greville is lavish in his praise almost to the point of insincerity. It is sufficient to note that, apart from his educational reforms, his visit to the North-West Provinces during the great famine of 1838 inaugurated a policy of relief which was to culminate in the construction of the Ganges canal, and to mark the beginning of effective control over these mighty disasters.

Two of Auckland's sisters accompanied him to India, and while he administered they entertained. One of them (Emily Eden) described the day-to-day life in a diary of more than usual wit, charm, and literary style; the MS. was

dedicated to her nephew, Lord William Godolphin Osborne, and published in 1866, nearly twenty years after the Indian grand tour she describes. 'You and I', she writes, 'are now almost the only survivors of that large party that in 1838 left Government House for the Upper Provinces. . . . Now that India has fallen under the curse of railroads and that life and property will soon become as insecure there as they are here, the splendour of a Governor-General's Progress is at an end. The Koobut will become a Railway Station; the Taj, will, of course, under the sway of an Agra Company (Limited, except for destruction), be bought up for a monster hotel, and the Governor-General will dwindle down into a first-class passenger with a carpet-bag.' Miss Eden lived on, delicate and formidable, to see Victorian progress sweep aside the world of her youth. The journey from Whig to Radical, from Holland House to Manchester, was one she did not undertake; but in this travel book, and in two delightful novels, she provides what is virtually an indispensable picture of a dead dynasty. In fact, although posterity has not recognized her, Miss Eden did for the Whig aristocracy what Miss Austen did for its middle-classes. Miss Eden's first novel, *The Semi-detached House* was published in 1859 and was an immediate best-seller. The second, *The Semi-attached Couple* was actually written in 1834, twenty years after *Pride and Prejudice*, with a plot based largely on it. The social changes in England between 1814 and 1834 had hardly ruffled the surface of London society. It was between 1834 and 1860 that the order of accepted manners was overturned. Once again Emily Eden acknowledges the new world in her preface to *The Semi-attached Couple*. She explains 'when I wrote it I thought it a tolerably faithful representation of modern society; but some young friends who are still living in the world from which I have long retired, and who have read it with the indulgence of happy youth, condescendingly assure me that it is amusing, in as much as it is a curious picture of old-

fashioned society.' Within a narrow compass Emily Eden bears witness to another family tradition—she expresses herself with style. The Eden family is a literary family, but the talent of Emily's contribution was irony and atmosphere. The following little extract gives you all you need to know about the characters and relations of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas in the *Semi-attached Couple*:

'Now, my dear Mr. Douglas, don't go off on those tiresome foreign affairs—you need not pretend to understand national feuds, if you have not found out what is passing under your very eyes; but I cannot believe it. You must see what an unhappy couple these poor Teviots are.'

'I cannot think all this can be so, Anne. It is too bad to be true.'

'Nothing is too bad to be true, Mr. Douglas; and nothing is true that is not bad.'

In 1928 Anthony Eden contributed an introduction to a special edition of the other novel, *The Semi-detached House*, which shows a verbal facility almost the equal of the novelist's own. He lightly delineates Emily's social position, touches off felicitously her virtues and limitations, and diffidently offers to the public a little book which, as he says, may bring to readers some of the pleasant ease which it describes. The *New York Times*, in an appreciation at the time of Eden's appointment to the Foreign Secretaryship saw in this admirable preface 'a sure literary touch'; and it is undoubtedly there. It is to be seen in the skill with which the introduction is exactly tuned to the novel that follows, and in the way the introducer subdues himself modestly to the task of introduction. He seems able to write just as his father, Sir William Eden, could paint, almost effortlessly—by some natural gift: a family inheritance, perhaps.

'*The Semi-detached House*', Anthony Eden concludes, 'cannot be acclaimed as a work of genius. Its writing formed the pastime of a woman of fashion when fashion was the world. Emily Eden—clever, well-read, a good letter-writer,

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and a witty conversationalist—found in writing a pleasant exercise. Those who read her books again may enjoy with her the leisured ease of the age of which she wrote, and may spend with her a passing hour among those whose lives were cast in pleasant places. If they lived in glass-houses, have we the right to cast a stone?'

.

Is it possible to detect any general trait running through this family of individualists? Above all they are thorough. Whether it be the keeping of a diary, the government of a province, a diplomatic mission, or a statistical inquiry, these Edens are able to assimilate the responsibility in privilege. Although their lives were placed in pleasant surroundings, and although they were in a position to pursue administration, research, literature and travel, without unduly questioning the fortune that gave to them so much and asked of them so little, they were never complacent. Indeed they were strengthened by an abnormally acute social conscience. They were humane in an age when cruelty was a commonplace. Integrity sustained them when indifference was the fashion. Like the Habsburgs they consolidated their good fortune by judicious marriages. A glance at the genealogical table shows Robert Anthony Eden a descendant of such famous men as Lord Brougham, Sir John Moore of Corunna, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill. It would be interesting to work out the family succession to the Foreign Secretaryship, for the result would probably help to explain the continuity of British policy more effectively than research into coalitions and party programmes. Lord Halifax, at the Pilgrim's Dinner on March 12, 1938, pointed out that both he and his predecessor Mr. Eden could claim affinity with Lord Grey, which all went to show that large families were as much a part of the Foreign Office as of the American Embassy. The Edens have never been in the strictest sense party men. If politics

was their profession, they never seem to have descended to professional prejudices and party dogmas. On the whole they were tolerant, and gave ample credit to the other view.

Here is the first Lord Auckland's considered estimate of his great commercial treaty—involving months of anxious negotiation, all the irritants of claim and counter-claim. The enterprise could not have been carried through if Great Britain's representative had not been fully convinced of the inherent rightness of his cause against all interests and arguments.

'I certainly do not pretend to foresee to what this new friendship between the nations will tend; possibly to something bad in the course of time. Still less do I pretend to foresee to what the contingencies of the old system of commercial hostility would have tended; probably also to something calamitous, and that soon. But in the meantime I am satisfied by all the sound principles of national policy that I can trace in the writings of David Hume, Adam Smith, Lord Sheffield, Mr. Necker, etc., that it would not only have been absurd, but immoral in the extreme, to have declined the present experiment, great and precarious as it may be. In the present it gives bread and employment and prosperity to millions, and as to futurity, the prospects are, at least, as good as they were. So much for my creed; at the same time I have perfect charity towards those who either think or pretend to think otherwise.'

The relentless opposition of a Mr. Walker is brushed aside with a friendly epigram. The other side of his conviction comes out in a remarkable letter to William Pitt. The issue was the extension of the trade treaties with France into a full conference 'upon the great question whether it is practicable to explain and arrange all causes of jealousy and uneasiness between the two countries.'

If history does not repeat itself it provides parallels, and the 'great question' has still to be answered. The

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passage of a hundred and fifty years has only intensified the meaning of the attitude Lord Auckland adopted in 1788 to the Anglo-French conversations. 'I doubt much whether this same conference may not do us more harm than good, unless we were in a situation to go fully and fairly into the question and to establish at least some leading principles as points on which we can eventually agree. If, as will probably be the case, we enter into discussion of this great subject without any definite purpose I do not think we shall collect anything from the French ministers which we do not know already, and yet we shall give them the impression of our having nothing in view but to extend information.'

It is not without interest that the annals of our diplomacy show the Eden of Montmorin speaking the same language as the Eden of Mussolini.

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What was the secret of our old nobility's unique sway? How were they able to hand down office by self-appointment, power without challenge? One of the clues, I believe, is to be found in Pope's contention that 'what is best administered is best.' These families, within a narrow and rigid framework, ruled well with deep understanding and broad sympathy. But when Shelburne suggested reforming the franchise—that was subversive, it threatened, as far as they could see, the entire social order. The Gordon riots were a dread warning. At the height of these disturbances the future Lord Auckland, then comparatively obscure, had written to Lord North: 'Unless the tone of civil government is restored by some very serious exertion we shall in forty-eight hours be in a state of anarchy, and shall see a general plunder, attended perhaps with a massacre of all the most respectable men. In short, the situation is most alarming, and without extreme activity and wise decision the nation is undone.' There was the haunting

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OTHER EDENS

fear that to open the door to the shopkeeper was to release the floodgates to mobocracy. It still exists—many assert it was some such fear that lurked behind Balfour's easy languor and steady inaction. But for Balfour there was less excuse than for William Eden. Information and surmise were open to Balfour which were not available to Eden. Balfour had before him the reassuring evidence that as our constitution broadened down from precedent to precedent, so a pyramid was forming of one aristocracy based upon another. The aristocracy at the top is sometimes unaware how strongly it is supported by the vast body of its inferiors.

Heredity and environment have conspired together on Anthony Eden's behalf. From the ownership of land to the service of Church and State his family have steadily gathered status during five hundred years of our history. During the spacious days of Whig supremacy they came into their own. Keith Feiling, from whose dazzling scholarship Anthony Eden was to benefit, has said the last word upon the dynasty to which those other Edens belonged. To the theme of Holland House he declared: 'If their standard of birth was in any sense a vice, it was then a vice which lost half its grossness. It might token selfishness, individual desire, a wish for power. But it announced also that the only justified and prudential power was rule over free men; that the very criterion of enduring aristocracy was that it was open, and not closed; that man was born free, although only his proved and attested leaders should break his chains.'

Chapter II

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FROM WINDLESTONE TO WAR

WINDLESTONE HALL, near Bishop Auckland in County Durham, has been the seat of the Edens for almost four hundred years, and it was here that Robert Anthony was born on June 12, 1897, the third son of Sir William and Lady Sybil. It is recorded that it was the hottest day the year had known, with a sun-temperature of over a hundred and twenty degrees.

The house itself, as an early topographer remarks, 'is seated on an easy inclination of the hill, with an eastern aspect.' The old hall, that went back to the seventeenth century, is gone; it was rebuilt in the thirties of the last century by Sir Robert Johnson Eden, who laid out the new building 'on a handsome plan, with extensive offices, and plantations.' It is this house which Anthony's grandfather saw when he rode over one moonlit night to view the property to which he had suddenly succeeded. Sir Timothy (his grandson) paints the scene for us in his biography: 'On the brow of the hill a long, low, porticoed house stood empty in the moonlight. A park, crossed by a silver chain of ponds and splashed here and there with inky shadows on its grey grass, swept up to a sunk fence where a close-cropped lawn fell away from the house to meet it. Behind the dull ochre mass of the building a further hill stretched upwards yet to a crest of wind-torn beeches.'

The Edens are native to this part of the country, the Ferryhill district, over which once roamed the famous brawn (or boar) of Brancepath, which, according to the legend, was valiantly slain by Hodge of Ferry. As early as 1413 we find records of a Robert de Eden hereabouts. Surtees, the county historian, referring to the Preston estate

of the Edens, two miles south of Stockton-on-Tees, calls it 'the cradle of the Edens', and it may be that this is their ultimate home. Yet it is round Windlestone our branch of the family is seated; and it is fascinating to watch the Edens slowly but surely, by marriage or by other forms of business, acquiring land here throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Thus in 1537 we find the manor in the possession of a Thomas Bentley, clerk, but with remainder to John Eden, son of William Eden, a mercer of Durham. Other parts of the estate can be traced passing from Lord Ogle through several hands into those of John Eden of Belsis in 1563; other lands come into the family in the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, until a considerable property has been built up. And finally, in 1616, Robert Eden of Windlestone settles the estate on his son Robert on the latter's marriage with Ann Bee; and this connexion of the Edens with Windlestone continues henceforward in unbroken succession to the present day.

There were to be later additions to the property, and like other county gentry the Edens did not fail to profit by the enclosures of the common fields, when so much of the land passed out of the use of the people of England. Some of their possessions they sold from time to time, either to concentrate their holding or to raise money; and in this way the old Preston estate went out of the family about 1820, and at the same time Sir John sold the lease of Belsis or Belassis—possibly to provide for the complete re-building of the house which he undertook. It had been from this land at Belsis that, in 1584, young Mr. Eden had drawn twenty marks to go up to the University, and later twenty pounds yearly when he entered the Inns of Court.

In 1873, after the usual genealogical adventures, the baronetcy came down to William Eden, who had been the second of a family of eleven, and it must have seemed that the House of Eden was well preserved against extinc-

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tion. But of all these eleven children it was only Sir William who perpetuated the succession, the others either dying young or without issue. There could hardly, however, have been a more brilliant parentage at that period than Sir William Eden and his wife Sybil Frances Grey. The one was handsome—a Sargent portrait come to life—and wealthy; a sportsman, an artist, and, above all an extraordinary character to whom mediocrity alike in life and art was impossible. Lady Eden came of the great House of Grey, and was accounted one of the most beautiful women of her time. It all sounds a little like a quotation from *Delina Delaney*, and it is difficult to resist the feeling that the Eden family is the finest creation of Miss Amanda Ross.

There was no lack of hereditary endowment here. There was, rather, too generous a provision; and it seems probable that Sir William's very superfluity of gifts and variety of character were a little overwhelming to the children who were bewildered by the sudden alternations of hurricane and halcyon weather that even Sir William's adult friends found trying. Although bequeathing some of his brilliance and, undoubtedly, much of his inflexible conservatism, he was in himself passionate, wilful, obstinate, erratic, and of a sensibility of eye and ear that bordered on the eccentric. The sight of red flowers in a garden, the yelping of a dog, the smell of whisky or tobacco were excruciatingly painful to him as were the voices of children; and he often expresses in his letters sentiments quite Herodian in their ferocity.

'For children,' says Sir Timothy, 'he had not the same unqualified admiration [as for flowers]. Children and dogs, who were generally associated in his mind, upset him with their idiosyncrasies, their barking, and whistling and merriment. "A dog is barking," he writes, "and everyone is whistling in the streets." That was his idea of hell. And again, "I painted amidst shrieking children, glorying in



DIVIDED COUNSELLORS

Eden and Neville Chamberlain in anxious conversation, after attending the first Cabinet after the vacation, September 29th, 1937

my annoyance. And people say, why have you such a low opinion of human nature! After all, the child is father of the man. Children are natural and *brutes!*" He could not endure for long the presence of his own children. He had not the patience to suffer their moods and tears. He was incapable of placing his intellect on a level with theirs. Their casual irresponsibility irritated him.'

But if he was eccentric in many things it was not from the mere vanity of eccentricity. For instance, there was no question of the excellence and seriousness of his painting. He was an accomplished painter, no mere titled amateur, and his works justly found a place in the exhibitions of the New English Art Club, the most progressive of the art societies of that time. It is very likely that he did suffer from an aural and visual hyperæsthesia, having an eye and ear more sensitive than those of normal people. His water-colours, for example, show an extreme delicacy of feeling; his reactions from people betray a similar refinement of so rare and high a quality that he found his circle of intimates (never large) growing more and more restricted. On the whole the outside world proved too coarse for his liking, which is not at all surprising when one considers the situation of that temperamental artist whom birth and social responsibilities had compelled to seek his proper companions among the county society; the thoroughbred aesthete is at a disadvantage amongst fellow thoroughbreds, while the full vulgarity of Bohemianism is, of course, impossible for him.

Sir William was much more than this imperfect creature ill at ease. He was a practical man of affairs, running a large estate, as well as a fine sportsman. It is said that there was not a better man to hounds in the north of England. He was three times master of the local hunt, and his shooting parties were famous, not least for the host's occasional storms of temper.

Sir Timothy gives an amusing yet appreciative picture of

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his father in the biographical sketch devoted to him—a tribute all the more pious and valuable for being frank—and if he describes his outbursts of temper, his occasional gross rudenesses, his forgetfulness of the feelings of others, he succeeds nevertheless in creating the image of a warm-hearted, noble and impulsive nature, loyal to friends, solicitous to those in illness, sympathetic and helpful to his tenantry. The real defect was that the mind was too acute and the feelings hypersensitive. If only the world were not so stupid! If only it could be peopled by William Edens!—all, it was assumed, would be well. Unfortunately when he did once encounter his equal, both in intellect and character, the result was disastrous, as the well-known quarrel with Whistler shows.

One might well feel proud in later life of a parent who had stood up to Whistler; but to his children he must have remained incomprehensible and distant in spirit. It is true he taught his children many things, and well; but it was, one suspects, rather in the manner of the gymnastics instructor.

Lady Eden looks out at us from the canvas of Herkomer and from the water-colour by her husband—the Whistler portrait being tragically destroyed—and in the grace and serenity of attitude one is tempted to read a greater strength of character than one usually attributes to the beautiful sitters to fashionable artists.

There is a hint here of that quiet tenacity characteristic of the family of Grey, which marked so successfully the political career of Lord Grey of the Reform Bill, her great-uncle, and—is it fanciful to suppose?—of that later Grey who was her son's predecessor at the Foreign Office.

Her father was Sir William Grey, K.C.S.I., who had been in turn Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and Governor of Jamaica. He was the fourth son of Edward Grey the Right Reverend the Bishop of Hereford, who was the fifth son of the first Earl Grey, brother of the statesman of

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Reform. The number of well-paid posts held by Greys can be due only in part to the thoughtfulness of the Greys in office: there must have been some ability inherent in the family to maintain them without ignominy in the positions they virtually inherited.

Anthony Eden, therefore, can boast not only a worthy descent on his father's side, but from his mother he inherits the blood of the Greys, and, indirectly, through them of the Mowbrays, dukes of Norfolk, and of the Nevilles, earls of Westmorland.

That Lady Eden was adored by her husband Sir Timothy makes quite evident in his biography, and this appreciation by one of such discernment and insight into character is more valuable than the testimony of a hundred others. One may suspect that it was Lady Eden's influence that was predominant with the children, and that it was due to her especial care that they were neither cowed nor unduly stimulated by the overwhelming temperament of their father.

At the time of Anthony's birth Sir William and Lady Eden had already two sons: John, who was nearly nine, and Timothy Calvert, aged four, as well as a daughter Elfrida Marjorie, who was exactly ten. A younger brother, Nicholas, was to appear in 1900. The eldest son, John, as a lieutenant in the 12th Lancers, went out to France in the very beginning of the War at the age of twenty-six and was killed on October 17, 1914. Timothy Calvert, the author of the brilliant little monograph on his father, thus succeeded to the baronetcy on Sir William's death in 1915. When war broke out he was interned in Germany at Ruhleben for two years, but returned to England in 1916, and as a lieutenant in the Yorkshire Light Infantry fought on the Western Front from 1917 to 1919. William Nicholas, the fourth son, served as a midshipman in the Navy, and was killed at the battle of Jutland when still only sixteen years of age.

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Anthony's only sister, Elfrida Marjorie, his senior by ten years, married in 1909 the sixth Earl of Warwick, and in one year became not only the Countess but the Mayor of Warwick. The sixth earl died in 1928, and his son, Charles Guy Fulke, Anthony Eden's nephew, became seventh earl and, in due course, a candidate for the films. This family alliance with the House of Warwick was to have an amusing sequel in 1923 when Anthony Eden, as the Conservative candidate for Leamington and Warwick, found himself in a contest between political and family loyalties.

Lady Eden's recollections of Anthony's childhood¹ are unfortunately brief. 'He was always the quiet one. They say that famous men are often the most mischievous as boys, but Anthony was never that. He never gave me a moment's trouble. He was, and he remains, the kindest of sons. He wasn't keen about games, though he became a fair rider, I remember, and a fair shot. But he never became the horseman his father was.'

Lady Eden believes that even in very early days Anthony had a leaning towards politics, and remembers that he would debate politics freely and that he kept himself informed of current affairs even at the preparatory school. On train journeys he would recall the political events connected with towns the train passed through, the chief elections, and the names of the candidates. It is not often the capacities of maturity are made manifest so early.

But politics was not at first the most obvious career. Anthony had inherited much of his father's talent—or something more than talent—for painting, and it is not impossible that, but for the War which profoundly deepened and greatly matured his character, he might have found his means of expression most aptly in art. His work is said to be good enough to suggest he might have made his name as an artist. As it turned out he gave first place to politics, but his interest in art has remained. It was well

¹ The *Sunday Referee*, February 27th, 1938.

known even in Oxford days, and it has resulted in a private collection of modern pictures chosen with discrimination and a sense of the future: an artist's collection rather than a collector's.

His education was in the hands of a governess until 1906, when at the age of nine he was sent to Sandroyd School, near Cobham, in Surrey. Sandroyd is an orthodox entrance to the expensive privileges of Eton and Christ Church, and has played its part in teaching foreign rulers to become English gentlemen.

Eden duly went up to Eton in 1911 to Ernest Lee Churchill's House, famous in the days of Mitchell, the great cricket coach, for its athletic distinctions. The Hop Garden, as it is called, lies at the very centre of Eton at the head of Common Lane and opposite the New Schools.¹ With Eden Minor in the Middle Fourth in 1914 was Henry Segrave, later to become famous for his speed records and even as early as 1916 in the Department of Military Aeronautics. L. N. Kindersley, too, was a school friend, son of Sir Robert the economic authority, who, with so many others of that young society, met an untimely death in France. Out of those twenty-eight members of the Fourth no less than nine gave their lives to their country in the war, and almost all saw active service.

Whoever would like an idea of the life of the Eton boy must turn to the large and entertaining literature on that peculiar subject, of which there is no lack. Even that will give but an imperfect impression of a society, highly idiosyncratic, secluded almost monastically from the daily world. But from a former Vice-Provost's book, Macnaughton's *Fifty Years of Eton*, and of course from Mr. Lubbock's *Shades of Eton*, one may piece together a faintly representative picture of how the masters think life is pleasantly lived in an ideal, almost Utopian, community

¹ Sir Timothy had preceded him there in 1907, leaving four years later when Anthony arrived.

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which, if it has the faults of too close seclusion, yet they imply has all those graces that, unfortunately, seclusion and privilege alone can bring.

At Eton Anthony's career was exemplary and promising without being brilliant. He emerges conspicuously in no extraordinary distinction or unusual escapade. He seems not to have attracted much attention, and there are no legends around his name. It appears he took a special interest in Divinity; at least he won the Brinkman divinity prize, which points to a nature more serious and scholarly than the average. This distinction was probably not so highly regarded by his contemporaries as his athletic prowess. He was a good all-round sportsman. He gained his House colours for football; he was a keen cricketer and a promising oarsman. It is said that only the outbreak of war in 1914 and Anthony's consequent leaving Eton, prevented him from getting his rowing colours.

Chapter III

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M.C., B.A., M.P.

It is no longer in the grip of the war-fever it seems ridiculous that at the age of eighteen a boy with no experience of life, without even the dubiously helpful years at a University, should have joined up and been drafted to the Front. In our saner moments this seems the criminal waste of youth which it really is. That a chance bullet might in a second put an end to the patient work of eighteen years and annihilate all the possibilities of the future—in this case possibilities so magnificently fulfilled—is proof enough of the irrationality of human life.

Unburdened by these reflections, young Anthony duly joined up and was attached to the King's Royal Rifle Corps in September 1915. He was gazetted temporary lieutenant and found himself on the Western Front in the spring of 1916—that year of tedious petty manœuvres and unprofitable local engagements, when companies were decimated to no purpose. In the confusion of communications that characterizes modern war, platoons would die gallantly because an order came too late, or did not come at all.

‘He’s a cheery old card,’ grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

In this, his first adventure into real life, he soon showed the ability which has marked all his later career. He became adjutant at the age of nineteen, and achieved the record of being the youngest one in the army.

June the 3rd was the King's birthday, and a larger number of honours than usual was distributed. Many of these went to the troops in France, and the occasion was

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taken for recognizing with the Military Cross the special abilities of some of the younger officers. Among these singled out for the royal favour was Temporary Lieutenant R. A. Eden, and the award was gazetted on the 5th of June 1917. If no spectacular sortie or heroic encounter gained him this distinction it was at least indicative of hard work, less prosaic perhaps but not therefore the less estimable.

From Ypres he was transferred for a time to the Somme, and at this moment, it is said, there were opposing each other the two men who were later to be in closer and even more momentous contact: Anthony Eden and Adolf Hitler.

The experience of all the horror and death must have lacerated his sensibilities and eaten into his mind. No doubt it underlies the intense sincerity of his various pleas for peace in our time. For him they were never the recitation of a formula with their spiritual home at Staff Headquarters. Though he has very rarely given direct expression to it, his is the front-line point of view. Once in a great debate on Disarmament he was sufficiently stirred to break away from his natural war-time reticence and anonymity. 'It is a truism now,' he declared, 'to say that those who have seen war are the least likely to want to see its repetition, and I think perhaps that the truism goes even deeper than that. It is not only that those who have seen war dislike it, but those particularly who saw the last months or the last weeks of the last war had a vision of what the next war might be expected to be. I remember an evening,' he went on, 'in the very last weeks of the war, in the last stages of our advance, when we had stopped for the night at brigade headquarters in some farmhouse. The night was quiet and there was no shell-fire, as was usual at the end of the war, but quite suddenly it began literally to rain bombs for anything from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour. I do not know how many bombs fell in that time,

but something between thirty and forty, I suppose. It seemed to us to be hundreds. I do not know what the explanation was, but perhaps it was that the enemy aeroplanes had failed to find their objective and were emptying out their bombs before crossing the line on their way back. Whatever the explanation, what rests in my mind is not only my own personal terror, which was quite inexpressible, because bombing is more demoralizing in its effects than the worst shell-fire, but the comment made when it was over by somebody who said, "There now, you have had your first taste of the next war!"

It was chiefly his precocious organizing talent that distinguished him and led to his promotion after his experience of fighting on the Somme to Lord Plumer's staff. He rose to the rank of captain at the age of twenty, and was actually posted brigade-major on his brigade's staff.

The war ended, and left him at the age of twenty-one successful as a soldier, with administrative ability plainly revealed, but with no plan for civilian life. His father had died, and his brother Timothy had succeeded to the baronetcy and the life of country leisure that this was considered to entail. It was left to Anthony to carve out a career for himself; the family that had given two sons to the country had survived it with a diminished fortune. The Edens may once have done well out of their country in the way of offices and appointments, but when the time came they repaid that debt in full.

It was Lady Eden, apparently, who suggested to Anthony that he should go up to Oxford and make up for the futile years of warfare. 'I think,' she is reported to have said to an interviewer from the *Sunday Referee*, 'that I can claim to have brought about Anthony's entry into politics after the war. I suggested that he should go to Oxford when he left the army. He hesitated first when I mentioned it. "What, go back to school, Mother?"', I remember him saying with an amazed expression. But he went.'

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The Oxford he entered in October 1919 was new, strange and without precedent. The usual young undergraduates were there, of course, though in diminished numbers, but the rest of the students were young men back from the war, older in years and far older from their experiences of the terrors and responsibilities of war. These had to conform to the adolescent conventions of a secluded university after playing their parts on an international stage; they had to turn to scholarship and to the minutiae of a curriculum. For the most part they found it difficult to settle down, although some of the academic restrictions were relaxed for their benefit. They found difficult the approach to their elders, comparatively unscathed by war, and almost impossible any companionship with the very young men who shared the university with them. Some devoted themselves to the more practical subjects; some could not manage the transition from the trench to the tutorial; some turned to study with the new energies and determination the war had called forth in them and resolved to make up for the wasted years of war. Anthony Eden was among these last. He realized the anomalies of his position. He did not try to make contacts with the young undergraduates, he decided not to attempt the artificiality of returning in time to the undergraduate stage and mixing with the general body. He set himself to study and to repeat at the university the success he had won in the career of arms. He did not make many friends. He held himself aloof. He did not write for any college paper. He did join the O.U.D.S., but there is no evidence that he attended frequently or took any active part in their work. And although it has been said that he was already seriously contemplating politics as a career, he did not join the Union Debating Society, the usual path for aspiring politicians, and he made no political speeches. Nor does it seem that he took any serious interest in games. In some ways he had chosen in Christ Church the best college for the pur-

suit of quiet individualism. For, unlike some of the smaller colleges, the 'House' is always tolerant of the man with asks to be left alone. Among the mixed generations at the university companionship could not be natural, and Eden wisely did not make the attempt.

He was, as a college servitor once remarked, 'one of the quiet ones'. Obviously an easy man to look after; and it seems, too, that he was methodical in his ways; rose betimes and always did his 'rollers', or roll-call. Occasionally he played tennis. He did little in the social life at Oxford. His entertaining was small, select, and judicious. He preferred a discriminate choice of friends, and it was usually only three or four who from time to time gained access to the talk of this studious young man at the 'House'. In the vacations Eden used to go occasionally to the house of a Protestant pastor near La Rochelle in order to perfect his conversational French, an acquisition which proved invaluable in later years at those intimate political conversations in Geneva or Paris so momentous for the peace of Europe. He had chosen Oriental languages, Persian and Arabic, as his subject, but there were one or two subjects more spontaneously, almost passionately, pursued. One of them was, of course—Eden being a man of taste—Jane Austen. Another was modern painting, and especially the work of Cézanne. Another—and here again one cannot but admire his judgment, so early developed—was Rimbaud, of whom at that time there were not many readers in England. It was his interest in the French Impressionists which led him to form the collection of pictures that has to-day grown to be a testimony to the independence of his taste and the sureness of his criticism. His admiration for Cézanne actually produced a paper on this artist for a small society, and it is regrettable that it has not reached a wider circle.

His tutor was R. Paget Dewhurst, and he it is who is credited with a prophetic insight into the future career of

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his promising student. Eden must already have shown some evidence of intending foreign politics as a career, for Professor Dewhurst is reported to have said that Mr. Eden would be Foreign Secretary by the age of forty. The skill in prophecy of the tutor must have been matched only by his ability as an Oriental scholar, for when in due course Eden took his Final Schools (he was just twenty-five years old) he got first-class honours in a very difficult subject.

He ended his scholastic career with the same distinction with which he had performed his military duties, and showed a Grecian genius for eminence in the arts of peace as well as war.

At Oxford he had decided upon politics as a career. There was, of course, no hesitation about party, and as a Conservative he felt, no doubt, that his native county ought rightly to return him to Parliament. So he seized the opportunity of the general election of November 1922 to offer himself to the Spennymoor Division of Durham. He had as opponents Tom Wing (Liberal), and John Batey (Labour). The one had a policy, the other the sympathies of the miners. Captain Eden had neither; and the accident of his birth in the district a dozen miles away and twenty-five years before does not seem to have impressed the constituents. The *Durham Chronicle* remarks kindly that 'his prospects of election are not considered promising'.

Wing's speeches are excellent, and, in the manner of Liberals, he has all the best policies. He appeals for lower taxation to stimulate trade, for the removal of trade restrictions, for the retention of the Ministry of Pensions, for the abolition of useless bureaucratic offices. He blames the Treaty of Versailles for many of the difficulties of foreign policy, and says—how ominous the words sound to-day!—'unless the Treaty were revised there would inevitably be established two opposing sets of powers in Europe, and this would lead to rearmament and another war.' As for Captain Eden he had formerly declared himself a supporter of

the Coalition—‘the best brains in the country’—now he came forward as the supporter of Mr. Bonar Law. Mr. Wing, it is to be gathered, presented this ridiculous anticlimax to the audience’s sense of humour.

Captain Eden’s principal election speech asserted the indispensability of Conservative Government to the country, and emphasized the point that Conservatives were not hostile to trade unionists in spite of the criticisms which were unfortunately so widespread. He declared himself a loyal follower of Mr. Bonar Law; said that the primary needs of the country were a revival of trade, ‘stability of national forces’, and the restoration of vigour and energy to great industries. Private enterprise had built up our industries; it alone could restore them. All these things could be done by Mr. Bonar Law’s Government. He would give the country security, develop the national markets, decrease the vast army of the unemployed. As for himself he hoped to see more capitalists, not fewer. And as for trade unionists they should remember that they owed many of their privileges to the Unionist Party (which was untrue). As for the Liberals they were weak in policy, weaker in unity, and weakest of all in leadership. They were still whales, but whales on dry land.

Unconvinced by this assertion of the necessity of Conservative Government for England; ungrateful for the favours of the Unionist Party to trade unionism, even unswayed by the prestige of Captain Eden’s supporter, the Marquess of Londonderry (the famous coal-owner), the miners of Spennymoor rejected both Conservative and Liberal and returned the Labour candidate. Indeed Mr. Batey with 13,766 votes was over 6,000 ahead of Captain Eden, and over 100 ahead of Captain Eden and Mr. Wing combined.

He had begun his political career in the usual way—by being defeated. He had no intention of abandoning this career he had now chosen, and merely waited for the oppor-

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tunity to present himself to a more appreciative body of citizens than the subterranean toilers of Spennymoor.

Next year (1923) the opportunity came. In October the electors of Warwick and Leamington said good-bye to their Conservative member, Sir Ernest Pollock, who had just been appointed Master of the Rolls. (He later became Lord Hanworth.) To step into the shoes of this very able member was not easy for a young man who had had no contact with Leamington whatever, and who was only invited in the first place as an unknown substitute for a rejected local champion.

Sir Ernest suited his constituents very well, but he had failed them in one respect. He had never provided them with an exciting election. In 1918 when he first won the seat only a quarter of the electorate had bothered to vote; in 1922 no one came forward to oppose him. A fog of apathy settled over the constituency.

Suddenly it lifted. 'Rumours indicate a rare exciting time', prattled the *Leamington Chronicle*. Not only were there to be three candidates—Leamington had never seen a Labour candidate in its midst before—but two of them were actually related, by marriage only, it is true; but the situation was an odd one.

To the Conservative candidate, stranger though he was, Leamington extended a friendly welcome. Captain Eden found nothing in this large rural division to remind him of the intractable Durham miners. This time he was opposed by his sister's mother-in-law, the Countess of Warwick, who, at the age of nearly sixty-two, was setting herself the formidable task of breaking new ground for the Socialists. The Liberal candidate was George Nicholls, a self-made Peterborough man, who wisely directed his energies towards the agricultural vote.

Even more interesting to the public than the one link of relationship between the two candidates was the fact that a second link was about to be forged. Captain Eden had just

become engaged to be married to Miss Beatrice Beckett, the daughter of Sir Gervase Beckett, banker and part-owner of the *Yorkshire Post*, and son-in-law of the Countess of Warwick. The wedding was to be celebrated in the middle of the campaign, November 5.

'The romantically-minded lady voters of the division', commented *The Times*, 'have already decided that the fates are busy forging a chain of coincidence, which must end in Captain Eden's conducting the vital part of his fight from the ancient stronghold which bears his Labour opponent's name, and which is the property of her husband. They point out that neither the wedding nor the election is to be put off, that Captain Eden cannot possibly leave the constituency in the middle of the contest, and that almost inevitably he, like his brother, will be invited to "honeymoon" at Warwick Castle.'

Indeed, so interested did *The Times* become in this tangle of family connexions at Warwick that it sent a special correspondent to stand on the old bridge across the Avon and gaze at 'the ancient Warwick Castle, rising above its immemorial elms, in its architectural magnificence and with its air of territorial authority—an emblem of stability amid Time's changes. I wonder whether the red flag would be raised over its towers and battlements. But that, I am assured, is not to be.' This was not mere optimism on the part of *The Times* correspondent; the red flag would not be raised over the Castle because the Earl and Countess could no longer afford to live there.

Although the constituency was already Conservative and well disposed to the new candidate, Eden was not walking into a perfectly safe seat. There was plenty of work to do. For one thing there were two hundred square miles to be covered; and moreover the electorate had been almost doubled since the last contest by the addition of about 19,000 women who were now to exercise their privilege of voting for the first time. Some saw in this the Countess's

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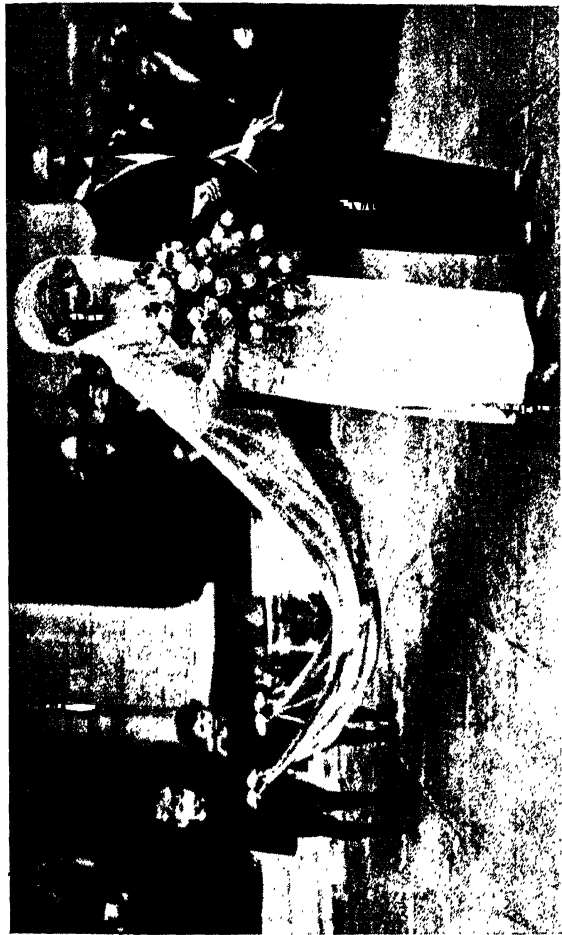
chance to rally her own sex in her support. Women candidates were rare in those days, and women had a way of demonstrating their solidarity irrespective of their political opinions. Others, more worldly wise, saw a much more likely bait for these susceptible voters in the person of the handsome young Conservative candidate. If the contest were to be one of Solidarity *versus* Sex Appeal, none could be better placed than Anthony Eden for the job of attracting the great majority of women voters who care nothing for political argument. That is not to say that he did not also stand a good chance of attracting the politically minded minority also.

On November 5 Captain Eden and Miss Beckett were duly married at St. Margaret's, Westminster. A few hours before, the ashes of Bonar Law, under whose flag Eden had fought his unsuccessful contest at Durham, had been buried in the Abbey not fifty yards away. The wedding was a normal Society wedding. The Archbishop of York officiated, assisted by the Bishop of Wakefield; Major the Hon. Evelyn Eden, M.C., was best man. After the reception the couple left for their honeymoon; to be spent not in Warwick Castle as the romantically minded lady voters of the division had thought almost inevitable, but in Sussex.

The honeymoon lasted two days. No more time could be spared: polling-day was only a fortnight ahead. Then after six days more campaigning suddenly the tension relaxed. Parliament was dissolved, a general election became necessary, and polling-day was fixed for December 6, over three weeks away. The candidates were nominated once again,¹ and the Edens went away for another honeymoon, this one lasting a week.

No doubt by this time all three candidates had had enough of the campaign, the longest in electoral history.

¹ Election results do not always accord with the number of nomination papers handed in. On this occasion the Countess of Warwick collected 114, George Nicholls 21, and Anthony Eden a meagre 7.



WEDDING AT ST. MARGARET'S

Eden and his bride, Miss Beatrice Beckett leaving the Church, November, 1923

By the end of it Captain Eden estimated he had made nearly eighty speeches. The delay told in his favour; he had time to make himself known to the voters and energy enough to stand the prolonged strain. For Lady Warwick, on the other hand, the long campaign was crippling. Indeed there was hardly one feature of the contest for which she might be thankful. From the beginning she was reproved for having consented to stand as Socialist candidate. At best, it was considered tactless of her to stand in Warwick of all places. She was not even credited with sincerity: for it was the general opinion that she would withdraw before polling-day.

The result was duly announced six weeks after the candidates had begun their campaigns. Seventy-five per cent of the electorate voted. Captain Eden polled 16,337 votes; George Nicholls 11,134; Lady Warwick 4,015; majority, 5,203. His future and his political position apparently assured he came to London, took a house in Mulberry Walk, Chelsea, and settled down to the social activities of a political career and to the pursuit of his artistic interests.

Chapter IV



MAIDEN SPEECHES

ON the evening of 19th February 1924 Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Samuel Hoare moved the following resolution on Air Defence:

‘That this House, whilst earnestly desiring the further limitation of armaments so far as is consistent with the safety and integrity of the Empire, affirms the principle laid down by the late Government and accepted by the Imperial Conference that Great Britain must maintain a Home Defence Air Force of sufficient strength to give adequate protection against air attack by the strongest air force within striking distance of her shores.’

The debate arising out of this resolution belongs to a dim and distant age when disarmament was the declared policy of his Majesty’s first Labour Government. In all the welter of goodwill only a few voices were raised in warning of the wrath to come. Sir Samuel pointed out that when he became Air Minister in 1922 at the peak of the Chanak crisis Great Britain’s first-line air force consisted of twenty-four ‘planes. During the period of office he had managed to bring the number up to eighty. This debate was concerned with a situation that showed the French to have a thousand front-line ‘planes and Great Britain a hundred. Sir Samuel asked whether the Government were going to continue the expansion schemes on which he had entered while he was Minister and which involved as a ‘first stage of expansion’ an increase in strength up to fifty-two squadrons or six hundred first-line machines. He asked a number of other questions of departmental and general concern. He sought assurances over civil aviation, and wanted news about the development of airships. He pointed

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out that the resolution standing in his name was 'very moderately worded' and sought only 'the bare minimum of air force necessary for the immediate defence of the country.' When Sir Samuel came to a financial estimate of his programme he assured the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the cost would not be very great, whereat the Chancellor shook his head. Sir Samuel reckoned that when the full expenditure had come into being it would not amount to more than between £5,000,000 and £6,000,000. This estimate covered not merely the next but future years as well, and meant a doubling of the Air Force.

Such was the idyllic language of Conservatism in 1924; but the Labour Government of the day detected in its implications the thin end of the wedge. Mr. Leach, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, was not to be tempted into a discussion of ratios and estimates; he pointed out that *si vis pacem, para bellum* was the one slogan the World War had knocked on the head. All the nations in the world that prepared most got the most war. 'Preparedness,' he asserted, 'is not the best weapon in diplomacy. The best weapon in diplomacy is to have a sound and righteous cause.' But his most daring flight was when he asserted that about two thousand years ago a great Reformer laid down the principles for solving this problem of national defence. Most unfortunately nobody accepted His views on the matter. They were buried with Him. 'I want to see some new excavation works to raise the lid of the sarcophagus of the New Testament. Perhaps the Churches may yet oblige in this matter, and not leave it wholly to the statesmen of a Labour Government. I believe a new gospel is needed. I suggest that if you want Peace you must prepare for Peace. This Government is preparing for Peace. We can already see a break in the clouds.'

Mr. Leach dealt briefly with the particular question Sir Samuel Hoare had raised. All that was possible would be done. Schemes were 'growing up' in regular and definite

stages. The Government was 'anxious to foster civil aviation.' In addition 'we are vitally interested in seeing that the lighter-than-air ships shall be explored, encouraged, and fostered in every proper way that is open to us.' In certain cases decisions had not been reached. In Mr. Leach's opinion—and he admitted that he was 'no great military strategist or an expert'—there was no defence against air invasion in the sense that an army could keep off an army, or a navy stop another navy from landing men. The only adequate defence against an air raid that he could see was a 'changed international atmosphere'. He attacked the whole idea of relative strength. The resolution, it seemed, asked for a one-power standard. But when you have got that 'some lunatic will demand a two-power standard, and then the hysterical Press will help it up to a three-power standard'. Mr. Leach reached his inevitable conclusion. 'If we continue to put fear at the helm and folly at the prow we shall steer straight for the next war.'

Mr. Leach was merely giving expression to his well-known pacifist sentiments, but unfortunately it not only was an official pronouncement on behalf of the new Government, but also confirmation of a speech made the previous week by the Prime Minister on the subject of National Defence, in which he had declared categorically that for some time to come the bargaining power of a British Foreign Secretary would have to depend not upon military force but upon the reasonableness of the policy which he presented.

The speech was thus responsible for a lively atmosphere in the House. There were frequent interjections; the applause and abuse assumed more than Party proportions. Morality itself was at stake. Major-General Seely talked of a most astounding doctrine which if followed to its logical conclusion would really mean the disbandment of army, navy, and of an air force too. He specified the horrors from an air raid. 'It can be said with certainty that not less than

one hundred casualties will follow every ton of bombs dropped.' From this assertion and other reasonable statistics he estimated that there would be 12,600 casualties from the first raid, 10,000 from the second, and for an indefinite period after that 8,000 to 9,000 daily. 'If it is asked, Is there an answer to an aeroplane? the reply is, There is no answer but another aeroplane.' Ben Turner interrupted: 'There is an answer—the New Testament.'

Major-General Seely stressed two points. First, there must be limitation of arms. Second, there must be an adequate air force; but unless you accept the second you will never get the first. Finally he stressed that air defence was a question for the Empire as a whole.

Mr. Wallhead, a prominent Labour controversialist, Assistant Postmaster-General and Member for Merthyr, attacked General Seely for being responsible for an astounding speech himself. He suggested that he might just as well have come face to face with the facts of the motion and have recognized that the only possible nation from which could have come about the dire effects to which he had alluded was the nation to which he had referred as our 'dear friends'—namely, the French. Mr. Wallhead asked succeeding speakers to tell him from whom they apprehended this danger. Was the danger from Germany? Even the most militant of anti-Germans in this country was compelled to agree that Versailles had completely disarmed Germany. Was the danger to come from the Scandinavian countries, or Switzerland, Belgium, or Holland? Separately none of them constituted a threat that need worry us and there was little likelihood of their ever uniting. Surely the Under-Secretary's plea for international understanding ought not to be 'outside the realm of common sense, statesmanship, and diplomacy when all possible opponents in Europe were eliminated except our present ally, France. Here was the opportunity so to arrange matters between France and this country that 'all possible danger of such a holocaust

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shall be removed entirely from the realm of international possibility.'

The Labour Party were called idealists, but it was idealism that was most urgently needed. There would be no progress unless ideals were translated into action. So long as the attempt was being made hon. members opposite had nothing to deplore. It was their duty indeed to encourage the Government. Hon. members opposite during the last war preached it was a war to end war. 'You took young men from their homes,' Mr. Wallhead exclaimed, 'and appealed to their moral sense. You told them on your recruiting platforms and in your propaganda that you were appealing to them by every sense of decency to help you to crush the militarism of Germany in order to lay the basis of peace in the future. Now when the Under-Secretary asks for common sense in place of common fear the idea is ridiculed.' Mr. Wallhead was aware that it took more than one to make a bargain, but we were hopelessly inferior to France and it was in the highest degree doubtful if we could ever catch up if we were to enter into a race with her. She will complete the race before we begin. He wanted action, not words. 'I believe with all my heart that if this country were definitely to begin by making a courageous attempt to bring about, by international relationships first of all, a diminution of armaments and a stoppage of this infernal race, *that* would lead up to the establishment of some power that would take the place of armaments and war, and our country would go down to posterity as one of the greatest countries that ever existed.'

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Woolly, perhaps, but sincere. It was a Labour speech at its best. It refused the technical fences but somehow completed the course. It was cunning in its artlessness. It provoked argument without giving it a foothold. Not a good moment for the Parliamentary beginner to intervene; but

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the immaculate and seemingly self-confident Member for Leamington was not dismayed. He had maintained a decent silence for the first six weeks of the new session. In choosing this dramatic occasion to rise from his place on the Opposition back bench and claim the unwritten privilege of priority over the speaker's impartial gaze it may have seemed to him that he had little to lose. As a young aristocrat with a good military record there was no *prima facie* case for trying to placate the hon. members of the proletariat. Discretion was the duty of the leaders of the Conservative opposition: for himself the obvious line was to say what Government and Opposition would naturally expect him to say in an atmosphere of confused working-class idealism. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Samuel Hoare had symbolized the sagacity of the staff officer, Major-General Seely the explosiveness of the 'brass hat'; what the Conservative case required now was a brief sprinkling of subaltern insolence otherwise Britain's air defence would ascend into the stratosphere and not be easily restored to earthly influence.

Captain Eden craved the customary indulgence during the ordeal of his *début*. 'May I, at the outset, ask for the usual courtesy and indulgence which is always extended to a maiden speech.' Then down to what was left of business: 'The last speaker made great play of a little geographical tour and he asked us from what quarter we expected an attack from the air. I do not know, but I do not think that is the point we want to discuss. Surely the point is rather that we should prepare to defend ourselves against an attack from any quarter. There can be little doubt that this question is of exceptional interest in this House, and the reasons are not very far to seek. In the first place it is not in the nature of things possible to provide hastily and at a moment's notice for air defence; and in the second place, the very heart of our country, the city of London, is especially vulnerable to attack from the air. For these

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reasons I hope that the Government will not be tempted too much by sentiment, and will rather act, as we gather from the speech of the Under-Secretary, not in accordance with his principles but in accordance with the programme he has inherited from other parties, and that the Government will, as a matter of insurance, protect this country from the danger of attacks from the air.'

It will readily be admitted that Captain Eden's first paragraph in Parliament was the reverse of conciliatory: Labour's moral plea dubbed as a 'sentiment'—Conservative policy put forward as insurance against Labour principles. Captain Eden hurried on to his conclusion. 'The Under-Secretary asked what was meant by adequate protection, and he said he believed preparedness was not a good weapon. That may be, but unpreparedness is a very much worse weapon, and it is a double-edged one, likely to hurt us very seriously. The Under-Secretary quoted an old military maxim'—(Mr. Leach had remarked that the resolution, divided as it was into two parts, reminded him of an ancient military slogan, 'Trust in God, but keep your powder dry'. When he added that it was a cynical motto, Labour members cheered. Mr. Eden was treading on dangerous ground)—'I will quote one,' he continued, 'which is, that "Attack is the best form of defence".'

This was more even than the customary indulgence and courtesy could stand, and hon. members shouted 'No, no!' Captain Eden was not to be diverted from his attitude. 'I expected hon. members opposite would be a little surprised at that doctrine: I was not suggesting that we should drop our bombs on other countries but simply that we should have the means at our disposal to answer any attack by an attack. It is a natural temptation to hon. members opposite, some of whose views on defence were fairly well known during the years of the war, to adopt the attitude of that very useful animal the terrier, and roll on their backs and wave their paws in the air with a pathetic expression. But

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that is not the line on which we can hope to insure this country against attack from the air. I believe and hope that the hon. members opposite will carry out the programme which they have inherited and will safeguard these shores, so far as they may, from the greatest peril of modern war.'

Captain Eden resumed his place, and the debate continued. "Jimmy" Thomas wound up for the Government, begged a number of questions, and although he complained that Mr. Leach had been misunderstood if not actually misrepresented, succeeded in investing the debate with some of his extra special *bonhomie*. 'It being after eleven o'clock the debate stood adjourned' reports the faithful Hansard; but as *The Times* acidly points out: 'It seems probable that only the Speaker's decision to refuse a motion for the closure saved the Government from a defeat in the House of Commons last night.' Mr. Leach was judged and found wanting. 'The whole tone of his reply, with its monotonous repetition of the phrase "for the time being", and its utter incapacity to grapple with serious argument, suggests a dangerous weakness in the Air Ministry so far as the House of Commons is concerned.' Whether Captain Eden had been responsible for 'serious argument' *The Times* does not say, his maiden effort was not singled out for special mention. The truth is that in a somewhat inauspicious debate he had made a somewhat inconspicuous début.

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The following week he intervened in his special subject, Persia. The occasion was the Committee of Supply for the Diplomatic Services. Once again he played a short, sharp note upon the imperial trumpet, but this time he also made use of the mute. 'I would like,' he said, 'to refer to the question of Consular Guards in Persia. These guards can be maintained only for one of two reasons. They can be justified only because they are necessary for the safety of those whom they are there to protect.' He concluded that

that was a subject on which it was difficult to decide without knowledge of conditions in Persia, and that such knowledge was difficult to procure but 'should that not be the case, and I cannot help feeling that it is not the case, then these guards are required for another reason and that is prestige.' Here he frankly admitted we enter upon a difficult and somewhat contentious ground. 'I would ask the Committee to remember that the guards, which may seem to us and to Europeans generally to be very unnecessary, do in point of fact in a certain way convey a sense of power. It is even reasonable to believe that the withdrawal of these guards might on a certain kind of Persian mind create an impression of weakness on the part of the country which had withdrawn them. In view of that danger, and also of the unstable conditions in Persia and the danger that may come to Persia and British interests in Persia from one of Persia's neighbours, it would, I think, be highly inadvisable to withdraw these guards if they really serve, as I am confident they do, as an outward symbol of British power in Persia. From that point of view they mean something to the Oriental mind.' To reduce them 'would be unwise and might certainly be mischievous'. 'One would like to know exactly in what districts these guards are employed and the real purpose for which they are used. If their withdrawal would in any way affect British prestige in Persia, which is none too high at the present time, it would be indeed unwise to risk endangering our prestige still further.'

What this small contribution lacked in style and maturity it made up for in self-assurance and its impression of authority. It was impromptu, but it was first hand. Further than that, it was groping for the *via media*, to which attribute Mr. Ronald McNeill (afterwards Lord Cushendun), a member whose Conservative convictions were rather more clear cut, all unwittingly paid tribute: 'I cannot quite understand the point of view of my hon. friend,' he remarked, 'because at first I understood him to express agreement with

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the opinion expressed on the opposite side. But he went on to say, apparently with some local knowledge of the country, that the procedure followed here was amply justified.'

Captain Eden's first question was an interesting supplementary. On the 12th of March Lord Crichton-Stuart asked the Prime Minister whether the Government intended to offer the Caliph Abdul Mejid—whom the victorious Mustapha Kemal had sent packing, person and office, from the new Turkey—refuge and residence in the empire in view of the great number of his Majesty's Mohammedan subjects. The Prime Minister referred to an answer he had made two days previously in which he had asserted that the Government were not entitled, either on political or religious grounds, to comment on or interfere in any way in a matter in which their policy had consistently been and would remain one of complete disinterestedness. That assertion must now be held to apply to all questions arising out of the decision of the Turkish government regarding the Caliphate. This policy, in view of the Lausanne Treaty and of subsequent history, it will be conceded was shrewd and far sighted, but Captain Eden urged the quick advantage. He asked whether the right hon. member would bear in mind that the offer of such an asylum would be a most effective reply to previous anti-British agitation on the subject. There was no reply.

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The second reading of the Peace Bill arising out of the Treaty of Lausanne was to provide Anthony Eden with his first major excursion into Foreign Affairs. On the 17th of March he had asked the Prime Minister whether he could state when an opportunity would be given for a discussion of the Treaty. The Prime Minister could make no promise. 'Is the right hon. gentleman aware,' he added, 'that a state of grave anxiety exists in regard to this matter among

our friends in Turkey?' The Prime Minister promised him that he would hurry on the matter as quickly as he could. On the first of April the treaty was brought before Parliament in the form of a Bill.

The situation provided by this debate was complicated and in some ways unique. The Treaty of Lausanne was the outcome of two conferences held in the life-time of the Bonar Law-Baldwin administration. The first sat in the form of three committees between November 1922 and February 1923, and has been brilliantly set out by Harold Nicolson and Lord Ronaldshay in their respective studies of Lord Curzon's career. This conference laid down the general lines of subsequent agreement between Kemalist Turkey and Great Britain. Harold Nicolson justly acclaims Lord Curzon's handling of that assembly. 'It will always remain among the classic examples of expert diplomacy'. But it was not merely a matter of preparation for British diplomatic victory, or the restoration of our prestige; it is essential to keep in mind the issues that were Curzon's objectives in all the discussion at the time—the freedom of the Straits, the Mogul question, and the Turkish-Soviet alliance. The conference is important also in that it liquidated the Chanak crisis. The implications of Chanak were grave. For the first time since the war, the world had witnessed the Allies refusing to co-operate against a military threat from one of the defeated powers and Great Britain left alone to meet superior force. It is notorious that elation and defeatism change sides with bewildering rapidity in international affairs. In this dangerous atmosphere of discord and disillusion Curzon helped Kemal to consolidate, but Kemal's victory was Curzon's ultimate vindication, for it meant the voluntary retirement of Turkey from the sphere of European ambition and European rivalry.

Curzon's negotiations, however, did not complete the procedure. Indeed when we left Lausanne there was the outward appearance of deadlock, but when the Turkish

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representative, Ismet Pasha, referred to Angora he recommended the Turkish assembly to vote for peace subject to certain modifications of the draft Treaty. These modifications were examined in London with Curzon presiding, and the second Lausanne Conference followed, which sat between April and July 1923. The Treaty was signed on the 24th of July. But domestic emergencies held up Great Britain's ratification. The Conservative Government immediately before its defeat, and the Labour Government immediately after its return, were too busy to find time for it.

Distance lends a splendour to the Treaty of Lausanne which was not so apparent when it was near and new. As J. A. Spender has pointed out: 'By it the Turks obtained practically the whole of their demands, including the recovery of Smyrna, Constantinople, and Eastern Thrace. With Angora as the new capital they had every chance of freeing themselves of European influence. The 'demilitarized zones' were guaranteed by the Allies, and 'the Commission of the Straits', set up by the Treaty of Sèvres, was turned into a conservancy board with powers diminished and under Turkish presidency. Thus there were nettles in this particular garland of victory. The Turkish question had already brought the downfall of the Lloyd George administration—which was on paper perhaps the most powerful coalition in British history.

From the Conservative point of view if the Treaty was good it was a pity that the precarious Labour Government relying on Foreign Policy for its success should get the credit for completing their work; on the other hand if the Treaty was bad were not the Conservatives the authors of the disaster? Labour on the other hand could only regard it at best as a step-child. On the whole there was a temptation that spread beyond control of Party Whips to bury rather than to praise it. Further Mr. Ponsonby, in moving the Second Reading, complicated the issue by stressing not the

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merits of the Treaty but of the procedure of ratification by Act of Parliament. He 'took advantage of the occasion in order to make a brief statement as to the intentions of the Government with regard to the important question of the submission of Treaties to Parliament'. There was no constitutional obligation for governments to submit treaties unless, as in this case, the treaties contained financial clauses over which Parliament had supreme control. 'I think, therefore, that we shall carry the general approval of the House with us if we endeavour so to adjust the practice with regard to the submission of treaties as to give Parliament, not arbitrarily in this or that case, but completely in all cases an opportunity for the examination, consideration, and if need be the discussion of all treaties before they reach the final stage of ratification.' Mr. Ponsonby warmed to his theme, great constitutional changes were envisaged. Secret treaties and secret clauses were henceforth 'to be rendered impossible'.

The Treaty and its origin were all concealed amid a welter of Socialist happy thoughts. He concluded by saying: 'I have explained the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne which is now before the House.' At which point Mr. Ormsby-Gore interrupted with: 'You have not said a word about it.' 'I mean the Bill arising out of the Treaty,' was Mr. Ponsonby's lame reply. 'After all, it is a small technical matter, and I will conclude by urging members in all quarters to help us in passing this Bill through its various stages in order that ratification may take place at the earliest possible date, and our normal relations with Turkey be speedily renewed.'

This was ingenious, but not powerful enough to divert the debate from the purpose of the motion. Sir Samuel Hoare gave a masterly analysis of the matter in hand, and with a minimum of partisanship extracted the maximum of credit for his side. The Liberals attacked it. Mr. Herbert Fisher described Labour's apology as a dirge and Sir

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Samuel's as 'a skilful exercise on muted strings'; while Sir Edward Grigg (speaking then as an orthodox Liberal) went so far as to move an amendment, not because the Treaty was necessarily bad in itself but because it represented an attempt at settlement outside the framework of the Covenant without proper reference to the Dominions. His amendment was seconded by Mr. Ramsay Muir, who gave the Treaty a piece of his historical and prophetic mind. Mr. Ormsby-Gore pleaded for fair play for Turkey, as did Colonel Williams, who backed Disraeli as against Gladstone.

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Captain Eden was next to rise. Once again, he put forward his point of view as of 'one who may claim some small first-hand knowledge of the country with which we are dealing'. 'We have heard,' he said, 'some criticism of this Bill this afternoon. We have been told of the things it fails to do and of safeguards which all of us would like to have seen included and which are not included.' He did not suppose any supporter of the Bill would try to deny the force of these criticisms, but if the Bill was to be judged clearly it was the wrong attitude to take up. He asked for perspective. He attacked those members who made charges against our representatives for not fulfilling conditions or obtaining guarantees at Lausanne which could never have been obtained without a resort to arms—which they would have been the first to condemn.

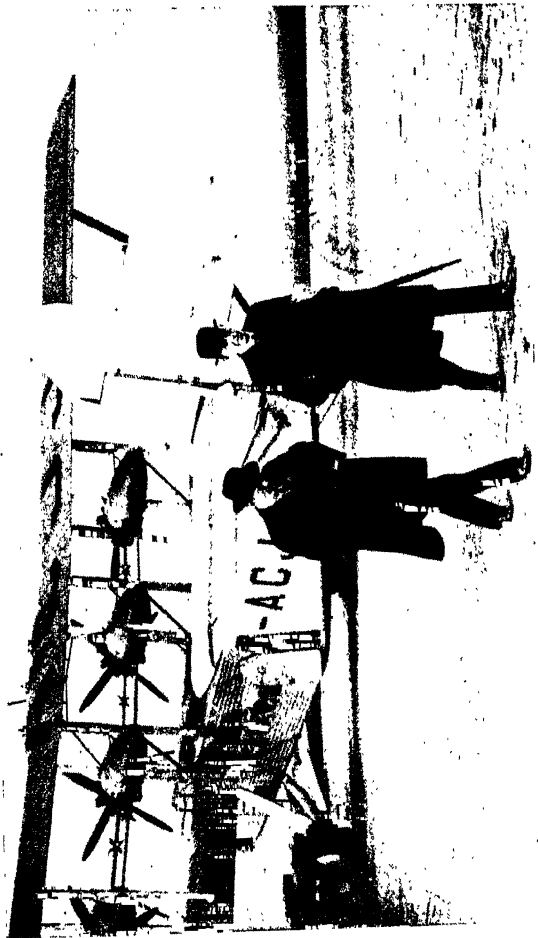
The position since the Armistice had been that in all the treaties negotiated by Mr. Lloyd George we were the victors. 'We could in a measure dictate our terms to the vanquished. Further—and very little reference has been made to this point—we were able to work, to a great extent at any rate, in unity with our Allies. At Lausanne the tables were turned and the position was reversed. In the eyes of the Turks we were the vanquished, not from the military

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point of view but because, rightly or wrongly, they looked on this country as having sympathized with aspirations of their enemies. Consequently they claimed that the defeat of the Greeks was a moral defeat of this country also. Further, as we all know, there was very little unity among the Allies at Lausanne. We had to deal not with a vanquished enemy but with the representatives of a nation fresh from a great victory—proud, and justly proud of the achievements of their armies, and knowing full well that they could only obtain the approval of their countrymen by securing terms which would redound to the credit of their country. I suggest that under those conditions—and that is a true *précis* of the conditions—it is a matter of the greatest congratulation to our representatives that an agreement of any kind was arrived at, and it is a great tribute to the patience, the tact, the zeal, and the understanding of our representatives at Lausanne.'

In the company of the mighty Captain Eden was holding his own. He had put forward with astonishing insight, although with equally astonishing moderation, the limiting factor of the new Kemalist Turkey. It must have been apparent to those who remained to hear the young back bench Member for Leamington that here was a man with something more than specialist knowledge of the Middle East, and that his sense of diplomatic values was more than usually acute. He had assessed Curzon's achievement with the nicety, if not of a kindred spirit at least of one who had an eye and a heart for international negotiation.

He went on to tackle the extremely thorny question of the Christian minorities. 'It is urged that there is not sufficient protection for Christian minorities within the Turkish dominions in this Bill. That is a very fair criticism.' But our representatives who fought for them were not supported and were consequently not successful; but as being important in arriving at a conclusion on this subject he called in the experience of history and asked whether



THE NEW DIPLOMACY

Eden and Lord Halifax at Le Bourget, March 11th, 1936, after the decision to transfer the Locarno talks to London.

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we had not over and over again obtained treaties with Turkish guarantees for the protection of Christian minorities which originally had seemed to be adequate, but which when the time of testing came had failed to enlist any actual defence for those minorities. 'It is,' he said, 'possible to exaggerate the value of those guarantees. We are far more likely to be able to assist those unfortunate minorities by acting as the friends of the Turkish nation on the basis of this treaty than by producing clauses which would only have been granted, if granted at all, resentfully and in a spirit of bitterness.' The Turkish people, in his opinion, had always been and were still resentful of any attempt by any other country to claim a prescriptive right over any portion of their citizens. He pleaded for friendly negotiation as against strict insistence on the letter of the Treaty.

He concluded with a few words on existing conditions in Turkey. 'I do not suppose there is anyone who knows that country or has studied its history who does not feel great anxiety about the existing conditions there.' They were passing through a period of ultra-nationalism. The Turkish people he reminded the House 'have always had a strong sentiment of nationality, which has sometimes been overlooked by historians who are apt to exaggerate their religious zeal.' At the end of the war the Turks were in grave peril; 'they felt paralysing strangleholds upon their future existence as a nation.' But 'it was nationalism that saved Turkey. It is nationalism that rules Turkey to-day. I believe that as time goes on other influences will prevail, and that a spirit of toleration will make itself felt, and then this country on the basis of this Treaty will be able to step in and share in the better relations between the two countries. I believe it is our duty to foster and build upon such friendship as exists to-day. That friendship I believe is very much greater than some people seem prepared to admit. This Treaty, whatever its merits or demerits may

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be, has brought to an end an era which did very little credit to this country, and it has also opened a new era, full, if you will, of doubts and anxieties for the future, but also I believe rich in promise of great and increased happiness to come, of more widely and more usefully developed friendly relations between this country and Turkey.'

This speech was undoubtedly a milestone on Eden's journey to the Foreign Office. The Prime Minister associated himself profoundly with what was said by the hon. member opposite. It was not the letter of the law by which Turkey was going to be judged. 'You can have the clauses beautifully drafted,' said Mr. MacDonald; 'clauses with guarantees, clauses with securities, clauses with commissions, clauses with consuls and representative officers, and after all they will not work.' The old Turkey was dead, a new Turkey had been born—here was a nation for whose welfare and friendly view our great Commonwealth of nations cannot afford to be indifferent.

Chapter V



RED-LETTER DAYS

CAPTAIN EDEN was making progress and taking pains. He had already, ten days before the Lausanne debate, intervened effectively on the Air Estimates, asking pertinent questions about subsequent employment for the short-service commissioned officers and about the seconding of officers from the Army and Navy to the Air Force. 'We all know the difficulties of that system, and that neither the Admiralty nor the War Office is very fond of it.' But he went on to say the attitude of the departments were minor difficulties compared with the all-important necessity of securing a more vital co-ordination between the various arms of the Services. 'That is, I think, the point in which our national defence is weak. We have all to realize that in the next war co-ordination will be even more vital than it was in the last war, and unless I am mistaken it is the Air Force itself that will prove the pivotal point in this co-ordination.' He had hoped to find the Under-Secretary for Air 'a very Cerberus' in defence of the Estimates, had been somewhat disappointed, and called on him to 'stiffen his back' against the other Services when he found himself in competition with them.

Keeping in mind the year: 1924, the background: Socialism's rosy dawn, this plea for co-ordination has about it the vision of Jules Verne. Inskip's functions as defined by Inskip fall short of its requirements. What Eden was urging fourteen years ago Winston Churchill is still urging to-day. But in those days he did not merely confine himself to the cultivation of a prophetic soul, to the casual brilliance so often associated with the young Tory and the silver spoon. He was prepared to undergo the rigours of what

Mr. Churchill is alleged to have damned as 'mere detail'. Two days after the Lausanne Treaty debate at approximately 1 a.m. we find him in the thick of the fray on the vexed question of diplomatic buildings. 'I rise to ask a question in connexion with the legation at Budapest. There is an estimate for new premises. I know the old premises very well, and they are very comfortable premises, but I am prepared to admit that new premises may be necessary. What I want to know is why the original estimate of £9,000 should be exceeded by more than half as much again, especially in view of the exchange conditions.' At which point he mentioned the consular residence and offices at Kermanshah for which £3,000 was voted in 1924-25 estimates. 'From a consular, diplomatic, and military point of view this place is most important, but I draw attention to it in order to contrast the vote for Saigon.' An impatient member asked: 'Are we not entitled to know why the hon. member is enlightening us about Kermanshah?' but Captain Eden was allowed to make his point, which was that 'the expenditure to which we were committed at Kermanshah—which I admit is justified—is £20,000, while the expenditure at Saigon, which is not so imperative, is £116,000.'

A few days later he intervened during question-time on a subject which, in the light of future events, has a wider interest. A member asked the Prime Minister about the personnel of the proposed Anglo-Russian Commission which was to bring about proper diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries, and in a supplementary the name of Mr. Maxim Litvinov was mentioned. He was apparently to be a representative on the Commission. Was the Prime Minister aware of his record; namely, that he was allowed into England as the unofficial representative of Russia in June 1918 on a definite understanding that he would not undertake propaganda in and against this country; that this promise was broken, and that on com-

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plaints being made to the Home Secretary of the time Mr. Litvinov's repatriation was demanded? Did his Majesty's Government propose now to address any protest or inquiry to the Russian Government on the subject? The Prime Minister thought it was not necessary to make any representation as suggested. 'Mr. Litvinov has repeatedly represented his government in negotiations in which we have taken part.' At which Captain Eden put in the damaging supplementary: 'Is it not a fact that early in 1919 Mr. Litvinov was requested to leave Sweden and Denmark?' 'That,' commented Mr. Speaker, 'is part of a question which I disallowed.' Another member rose but Mr. Speaker added decisively: 'In these international matters I must see questions before they are put.'

Captain Eden's knowledge of the famous Soviet Foreign Minister was to grow in a very unexpected and gratifying way, but in these questions were the seeds of the immediate crisis that was to lead to the overthrow of the Labour Government.

Captain Eden, however, did not confine himself during his first session to Foreign Affairs and to Near Eastern conundrums. In addition to the usual run of committee and constituency work he showed an active interest in a whole variety of subjects. He had questions to ask and comments to make on land reclamation, the Ministry of Labour's functions, housing, on the exemption of horticultural and agricultural halls from entertainment tax, and on secondary schools.

On this last subject he made an extremely original and forceful speech just before the session ended. In asking for the reduction of fees payable in the preparatory department of secondary schools, he said he had received no satisfaction 'by the method of question and answer' and that he understood that the fees had actually been raised. The new regulations placed a heavy burden on people not in a position to bear it. Having developed this point he then

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succumbed to the temptation of mixing his art with his politics. He said he was glad to hear of a hint from the Minister that he was going to undertake a new departure and add to our education 'a rather wider knowledge of our art treasures and what art means to us.'

The Minister had spoken strongly about the work being done to prevent some of our greatest art treasures leaving this country, and he had made an appeal to private enterprise and people to play their part in saving them. 'But,' added Captain Eden, 'I suggest that it is possible that we are asking too much in this respect from private enterprise.' He suggested that 'the real action this committee should take is to do what is done in Italy, that is to make it absolutely illegal for any possessions for the instruction or joy of the people of this country to be sold to another country and to be taken abroad. We want to keep these treasures for the enjoyment of our own people, and we should make it illegal to allow them to pass to other countries.' In case this fine piece of aesthetic patriotism gives a false impression, it should perhaps be added the hon. Member for Leamington was at the time rapidly becoming famous as a collector of Cézanne!

Perhaps it was his conscience coming to life when he made a connoisseur's reference to art education: 'I agree we are extremely backward in that matter, and it might be a great advantage if those children who now come to London to see the attractions at Wembley were given an opportunity annually of seeing something of the kind for educational purposes. I hope the right hon. gentleman has not in mind the trying of something like a national art movement, because we have tried it once or twice with calamitous results. The Gothic revival was, I believe, a national movement, and we want no more national disasters of the type of the Albert Memorial. There are methods and means by which we can avoid that result. I hope the President of the Board of Education will not do what we

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have seen so much of, that is try to try to ram down the children's throats that this or that is good for them all of a heap and a muddle.' He then allowed himself, what has always been with him the rare luxury of a personal anecdote. 'I remember,' he said, 'once being in Italy in a famous gallery where I was sitting quietly. I was rather sleepy at the time, and there entered a party who woke me up and disturbed me, and I heard the guide say to the party: "This is the famous Titian room. This is the famous picture of Venus, and the lady was seventeen years of age when she was painted. Now we will pass on to the next room"! That is not education at all. The only way to pursue that kind of education is to make it as easy as possible for our children to see valuable art treasures and pictures, not too many at a time, and allow them to see them as long as their eyes care to rest upon them.'

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The House adjourned on 7th August for the summer recess. It met again on 30th September; by 9th October the House had been prorogued, the Labour Government defeated, and the country in the throes of a General Election. During those few dramatic days Captain Eden made one intervention, and that was on the complicated and bitter question of the Irish boundary. The Labour Party stood for the Bill and nothing but the Bill for granting wide powers to the Boundary Commissioners in their adjudication between Ulster and the Free State. Captain Eden followed Mr. Lloyd George, who had urged that the Ulster boundary was not defensible and that a meeting between Mr. Cosgrave and Sir James Craig would solve nothing. They had the elements of statesmanship, but they lacked the authority to make a settlement. 'The Irish Celt,' said Mr. Lloyd George, 'lives largely on the past. The Treaty of Limerick is a thing of yesterday, but the Battle of the Boyne is a thing which happens every year on the

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12th of July. You try to settle a quarrel in Ireland and you find it started with Brian Boru.' It was no use Great Britain trying to pacify Ireland by amending treaties because 'circumstances have changed'. Lloyd George was in scintillating form, but Eden was not in the least overawed. 'Surely some consideration should be given,' he said, 'to the interpretation which this House placed upon the treaty when it approved of it. From what I have heard stated in this debate I feel thankful that I was not a member when it approved of the treaty.' Surely we were entitled to have our interpretation and the Free State theirs. 'I for one,' he went on amid loud "hear, hears", 'am nauseated with the perpetual use of the word "honour"'. If we all do our duty as we see it, without fear and without favour, our honour will take care of itself. The greater the injustice the louder seem to be our appeals to honour.'

In view of recent partition discussions several of the dicta of Anthony Eden in 1924 are material for discussion to-day. Indeed as we go through his early and obscure efforts their application to recent events is striking. 'Ulster owes her very difficult and ambiguous position,' he asserted, 'simply and entirely because she has responded to the appeal made to her by this House and by the British people.' Again: 'I agree that it is essentially an Imperial issue, but I am not sure what the feelings of the Dominions will be when they see us setting up a Commission empowered to take away large slices of territory from a self-governing community against its will.' Finally: 'If the South hopes for what the North is determined it shall not get, then there is no hope of a settlement.'

All the while the question of Anglo-Soviet relations was increasing the tension in Parliament and threatening the flimsy Liberal-Labour alliance. In Foreign Affairs the Government's policy and principle had met with success. It had translated the problem of German reparations into something like feasible finance. while reinforcing the ar-

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rangement by obtaining America's collaboration. At the same time MacDonald achieved an incredible triumph in his negotiations with Herriot, and persuaded him to withdraw the French troops from the Ruhr. Anglo-French relations were in fact clarified and reinforced. MacDonald, who had taken on the double office of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, gave real momentum to the authority of Geneva.

The attempt to achieve normal relations with Russia was not in itself a sufficient reason to bring the Government down. Admittedly the memory of General Wrangel and the first impact with an absolutist ideology dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism caused our Conservative public opinion to put its class-consciousness before its economic self-interest, and admittedly a Labour Government was *ab initio* suspect. But it could, no doubt, have carried the day if it had shown more resolution in its method of handling the negotiations. And as Mr. Spender¹ has pointed out: 'In the last weeks it had shown a wavering mind which suggested to the House of Commons, always sensitive on this point, that it was liable to the control of influences outside Parliament and unknown to it.' Thus in June the Prime Minister gave an explicit assurance that there would be no British guarantee of a loan to the Soviet. In August he stated that the negotiations had broken down over the compensation to owners of nationalized property. Then, immediately afterwards, he declared that a treaty was in draft which, when certain conditions had been fulfilled, would in fact contain provisions for the loan.

Then came the complex vacillations and ambiguities of the Campbell case, which Mr. Clynes has indignantly described in his autobiography as 'the most trumpery excuse ever elevated to a level of national importance'. None the less Sir Patrick Hastings (the Attorney-General) and Mr. MacDonald involved themselves in an orgy of pompous

¹ *Short History of our Times*, p. 283.

tomfoolery and tarry-diddle and played right into the hands of their experienced enemies. The Liberals' face-saving amendment calling for an impartial inquiry into the whole affair was indignantly rejected, and a purely Parliamentary battle which ought never to have been provoked, but to have been at all costs assuaged, was carried to the bitter end of defeat and dissolution. There followed one of the most vitriolic and unsatisfactory general elections in British political history, for in the middle of it the *Daily Mail* published the notorious Zinoviev letter. This letter was addressed to the British Communist Party by the *Presidium* of the Communist International—a body which had affiliations with the Soviet Government. It was dated 15th September, and urged our Communists to 'stir up the masses of the British proletariat to organize and foment mutiny in the army and navy and rebellion in Ireland and the Colonies.' Preparations were to be made for an outbreak of active strife. Even the Labour Party itself was numbered among the damned. A close watch was to be kept over its leaders 'because they may easily be found in the leading-strings of the *bourgeoisie*.'

The date of its appearance in the *Daily Mail* was Saturday, 25th October—five days before polling-day—and it created a national sensation. The *Daily Mail* asserted that the Foreign Office had come into possession of the letter, who had sent a demand for an explanation to the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires. The Soviet Chargé d'Affaires (a personal friend of Zinoviev) at once disowned the letter and called it 'a clumsy forgery'. If Mr. MacDonald had followed up this denial with one in similar terms the situation might have been saved. But he maintained a fatal silence. As Mr. Clynes has asserted: 'Mr. MacDonald's timidity, and his obstinate refusal to denounce this obvious forgery for what it was lost us the election.'

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The contest at Leamington this time was a straight fight between Eden and the indefatigable George Nicholls. Lady Warwick did not enter the fray again. Nicholls once more based his appeal on his practical knowledge of agriculture. 'Having been a farm labourer myself, I know his needs as well as any man in the land.' His election address was astute and calculated to obtain a widespread West Country allegiance. It eschewed the sensational events that had taken place in Westminster, but emphasized a positive programme to attack rural unemployment. 'When in Parliament,' he said, 'I voted for fixity of tenure, increased compensation for improvements, freedom of cropping, the Butter and Margarine Act, the Fertilizers and the Feeding-Stuff Act, and the Small Holdings Act.' He had served on a Royal Commission on Agriculture. Free Trade, the immediate appeal of which has been commercial rather than agricultural, was given a local flavour. It was in Leamington, Mr. Nicholls pointed out, 'that Cobden's appeal was made to John Bright to join the great crusade against food taxes.' He described his career of strenuous service. 'While, therefore, I claim to stand for all classes, I yield to none in my determination to help the masses of working men and women.' Nicholls was thus an experienced campaigner. He made brief reference to the Campbell case at the end of his address.

Eden, however, without any ado ran right into it with the heading in bold type, 'The Campbell Prosecution.' 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he began, 'by refusing to allow an inquiry into its conduct in connexion with the withdrawal of the Campbell prosecution the Government has courted defeat and forced a rushed election upon the country. Its refusal to face an inquiry, however constituted, can be due but to one of two motives: either to fear of what an inquiry might reveal, or to a desire to precipitate an election rather than face the verdict of Parliament upon the outcome of recent negotiations with the Bolshevik Government of Russia.' His

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second heading was directed at Anglo-Soviet treaties, which were denounced as 'makeshifts hurriedly improvised in response to pressure exercised by extremists in this country. They embody the principle that the British taxpayer shall guarantee the repayment of a loan to the Bolshevik Government—a Government actuated by motives of hostility to the British Empire and to all that it stands for.' In view of the Zinoviev letter this sentence alone was probably sufficient to consolidate his majority.

It is not impossible that the general form of the address was based on a suggestion from headquarters, for it will be noticed that nearly every Conservative election address begins with its reference to the prosecution of the miserable Campbell and to the dangers of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty. The rest of Eden's address has an interest now as evidence of his views on domestic policy which henceforth were bound to engage less and less of his attention. Oddly enough this address makes no reference at all to Foreign Policy as such, and completely ignores the League (Nicholls, on the other hand, pledged himself to make it 'an effective reality'). Considering that the Geneva Protocol was a matter of immediate concern, and British ratification or rejection was likely to be the one of the first decisions of a new government, his omission may have been deliberate.

He had done well enough in his first Parliament to cultivate after this election a 'lively sense of favours to come'. His two other attacks were, first, on Socialist failure to apply their 'positive remedy' to cure unemployment. 'Since it has been in office,' he asserted, 'it has had ample opportunity of applying the remedy—if it ever existed. It has not done so. . . . It has broken faith with the electors', and secondly (in thicker type) on Liberal responsibility: 'For these and other errors committed by the Socialist Government the Liberal Party cannot escape full responsibility, as it placed the Socialists in office and kept them there.'

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frame a comprehensive scheme of contributory insurance whereby the amount of pension will be increased and obtainable at an earlier age. . . . The present system is not just, and some reform is urgently needed.'

His attitude to education was progressive. He called for an equal opportunity to be afforded every child in this country of making the best use of his or her talents with the help of an effective practical education: for the reduction in the sizes of classes, improvement of school buildings, adequate salaries for teachers.

Further, he grasped what is still a nettle in rural politics, the denominational question. 'We must safeguard the right of parents to have their children brought up in the religion to which they are attached.' He demanded 'a more humane and more elastic administration of the Ministry of Pensions. As an ex-Serviceman I shall be proud to do all I can to obtain justice and fair treatment for all ex-Servicemen and for the dependants of those who gave their all for their country.' He concluded with an appeal for stable government. It is interesting to note again his emphasis. Socialism is not condemned as being subversive but as being inefficient. Minority government is an experiment that has failed disastrously. 'It is an essential condition of a return to prosperity that we should be ruled by a stable government with a clear majority. Only one party, the largest—the Conservative Party—can hope to secure such a majority, and I appeal to all who have the future prosperity of the country at heart—to whatever political party they may belong—to use their vote and interest on behalf of the Conservative cause and stable efficient and progressive government.'

This address is symptomatic of the new Conservatism that was to rally round the new leader of the Party, Stanley Baldwin. Cutting out the flamboyant crusading zeal of Young England, Baldwin sought to resuscitate the Tory democrat. From the 1924 election onwards Baldwin's broad-

bottomed Conservatism was to prevail as much over the true-blue Tories, who had learnt nothing and forgotten almost everything, as over the official pink to crimson Socialism. In the search for the *via media* the Liberals were refusing to close their ranks and failing to digest two such overwhelming personalities as Asquith and Lloyd George. Baldwin instinctively looked to the *via media*. If he had lived in another age he might well have been rejected as a time-server. As it was, events and public sentiment conspired alike to force success upon him. The curious thing is, however, that although Baldwin's tolerant and progressive approach to Conservatism was calculated to draw and to demand the support of the younger elements in the Party, Baldwin himself did little to encourage youth.

The 1924 election was a triumph—the Campbell and Zinoviev bogies worked with shattering effect. Baldwin came back with the Conservative Party 415 strong, Labour down from 191 to 152, and the Liberal Party reduced from 155 to 42. The feud between Coalition and Non-Coalition Conservatives died away. Austen Chamberlain became Foreign Secretary, Birkenhead took the India Office, Bal-four became Lord President of the Council, while Mr. Winston Churchill returned to his old Tory allegiance to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was a ministry of many talents, but youth was not served. To the infinite detriment of our public life Mr. Baldwin proceeded to fill his under-secretaryships with the aged, the infirm, and the second-rate. That he did so, however, must not necessarily be attributed to a forgetfulness on his part. In the first place he has on several occasions defined in terms of patronage associated usually with adolescence men getting on for fifty. His own career began late: and he may well have felt that an under-secretaryship for a man of fifty was in fact giving youth its chance; and secondly, he was a believer in Parliamentary apprenticeship.

From 1906 to 1918 Mr. Baldwin sat and listened.

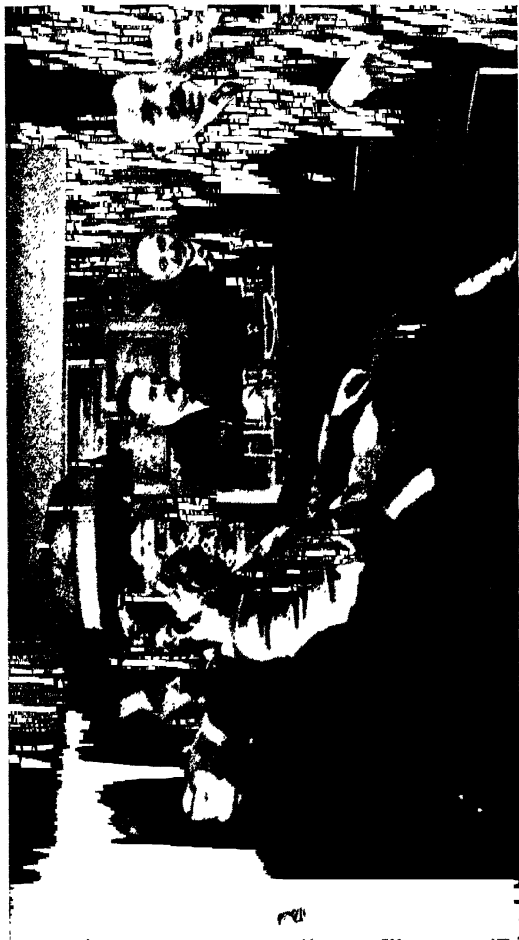
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Charles Masterman has described how the obscure back bench member for Bewdley would remain in his place and listen hour after hour to dull speeches on unimportant subjects slowly absorbing the subtle technique requisite for Parliamentary leadership. He learned also, no doubt, to assess the potentialities of members and to grow suspicious of the early brilliance that could not sustain the rigours of party discipline or committee detail. But in spite of what proved to be tragic circumspection in 1924, the member for Leamington had not missed his eye. Eden had consolidated his position¹: increased his majority by 1,000 and his aggregate by 3,000. He had apparently gathered in quite a number of Lady Warwick's Labour vote. Anyway the versatile and confident speeches of the last session were no flash in the pan. Reward and responsibility were indicated.

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The first step in the ladder of Parliamentary promotion is the Parliamentary private secretaryship: success largely depends on personal relations and Lobby influence. Eden's guardian angel at this stage was Godfrey Locker-Lampson, who was appointed Under-Secretary to the Home Office and so second in command to 'Jix'. Locker-Lampson was an experienced politician and a lively personality. His interests and talents were similar to those of Eden. He was at once journalist and traveller. Eden soon settled down to his new duties; he was in closer contact with a department. There was greater scope for the outstanding, indeed almost precocious, organizing gifts he had shown during the war but which had been latent and unused since. There were, of course, not so many opportunities for debate; but al-

¹ Shortly after the election Eden's eldest son, Simon Gascoign, was born. The child was christened on February 28th, 1925, at Chelsea Old Church. Included in the godparents were the Earl of Faversham and the Countess of



IN THE KREMLIN

The scene in Molotov's study on 29th March, 1935

Left to right : Eden, Stalin, Molotov, Maisky, Lord Chilton and Litvinov

though his speeches were rarer, the occasions were more carefully chosen, the opinions more deeply considered, the arguments more closely knit.

It was a sound instinct that led him on 25th March, 1923, to make his first speech in the new Parliament in an important unemployment debate. The quotation from Baldwin he had used in his election address made it clear that the Party would for the future be letting in Protection by the back door, but the only effect of that was to put more of the limelight than ever before on to financial and industrial questions as a whole. The atmosphere was tense. There was the threat of great strikes. Socialists, embittered by what had all the appearance of electoral sharp practice, were urging direct measures to short-circuit laborious constitutional procedure. 'All the bitterness', says J. A. Spender, 'left over from an exceptionally bitter election was now to run into industrial channels.' But the compelling problem around which the bitterness was bound to surge was the ever-increasing volume of unemployment. From this time onwards, until the unrest culminated in the General Strike, the old condition of the people question was constantly raised under one heading or another.

Eden's speech was sound and detached. It avoided sentiment, but without undue prejudice laid down the principles of a constructive policy. He confessed to a certain sense of pessimism. 'We seem to hear very much the same argument, very much the same lamentations and very much the same expression of hope, and yet we seem to have very much the same number of people out of work.' Sir John Simon, who had opened the debate, came in for some criticism which must have been galling to one who has so successfully identified righteousness with majorities. Eden accused Sir John of confining himself to a series of questions. 'There are, no doubt,' he added, 'advantages to be obtained from belonging to a party without any hope or aspirations to office because they are able to question cate-

gorically and without responsibility the acts of governments of recent years.'

It is noticeable that in the tolerance of the Baldwin Conservative to the Opposition as a whole was an underlying hatred for the Liberal Party. Above all they were to be the spiritual heirs of the old Liberal ideals. As long as an authorized Party existed to challenge their claim to Gladstone's will and testament their position was inevitably suspect. So we find Eden on the one hand blaming Liberals for their responsibility in keeping Socialism in power, and on the other mocking them for ineffectiveness. Snowden also was assailed for his failure to be constructive. 'He gave us—and we should have been disappointed had he not given us—the explanation that the present social system was the root of all the trouble'; but he could hardly expect the present Government officially to introduce Socialism on a drastic scale. Snowden had differentiated between productive and non-productive work, but where precisely was the line to be drawn? 'Everybody in this House wants each individual in the community to pull his whole weight. The trouble with the idler is that he always appears to be the busiest person. A certain gentleman usually pictured in black always finds work for idle hands to do. We must have some better definition than that.' He defended landowners from wanton attack although admitting that he was not a landowner himself. In many cases they rendered useful services to the community. It was for the community to decide whether the services were effective. Anyway, land legislation was no solution to the present unemployment. Exactly how the 'community' (a Baldwinian word) was to pass any effective judgment on landlordism Eden did not specify.

In his analysis of post-war economic conditions and in his respectful suggestions to the Government he played upon a familiar theme: 'There are many social reforms we should all like to see carried through, but it is no use to put the

cart before the horse.' To reduce the burdens of direct taxation, and to assist our industries to keep old markets and find new ones, was 'a case very much of now or never.' This speech contained the seeds of policy that subsequently were to grow into Ottawa and Empire Free Trade. Thus: 'We have lost our balance in this country. We are overtopped. We are too much industrialized and too little agricultural for the size of the country.' To get that balance back we want to bring in the Dominions and Crown Colonies that make up our Empire. The Empire must be looked upon not as a series of units but as one unit. Once again, how a rural bias was to be reconciled with preferences for a fundamentally agricultural Empire was not explained. Once again loose Baldwinian phraseology was invoked. However, it was a competent Party speech, and one calculated to convey that pure impression of industrial relations so neatly caught by Max Beerbohm in his caricatures of Mr. Baldwin's approach to the problem—where the Prime Minister is shown complacently surveying the representatives of Capital and Labour shaking hands underneath a rainbow!

On the 8th of May Eden made a brief speech on electoral reform—the occasion provided by a perennial Private Member's Bill. He praised the provisions for sick voters. 'The sick voter is entitled to consideration,' he declared, 'particularly on this side of the House, because anyone who is in bed is a Conservative. They have more time to think!' At which point an honourable member interrupted with some justification: 'Are all Conservatives in bed?'

Although this in itself is an unfair example, an examination of Eden's speeches give substance to the belief that wit does not come easily to him. A few days later he provided an interesting sidelight on an artistic controversy that created a major sensation at the time. His chief (Mr. Locker-Lampson) was asked during question-time who was responsible for the selection of the stone panel recently erected in

Hyde Park to the memory of the late W. H. Hudson. There was badinage both from the aesthetes and the philistines. One member suggested to the Under-Secretary that the *Daily Mail* should in future be made the absolute arbiter in these matters. Another suggested that the artist, owing to inadequate knowledge of the English language, thought he had to produce a sculpture dealing with birds and had erected a scarecrow; and yet another, Sir William Davidson, representing the constituency with the Albert Memorial in it, asked the Under-Secretary whether the panel did not in fact show 'a deformed female figure with elephantiasis of the hand?'

In this atmosphere Eden intervened with high seriousness to ask his chief whether 'he will give at least six months to a certain section of the public in order that they may learn to appreciate this work of art. I wish further to ask whether in point of fact there has ever been any work of art of merit that has not led to a storm of abuse?' This was gallantry and good sense, but symptomatic of that streak of earnestness in him which on occasion seems to deaden his sense of irony.

Chapter VI



‘PLACES IN THE SUN’

AT THE beginning of July 1925 Eden interrupted his political activities to undertake a journalistic mission for the *Yorkshire Post*. Although his career was now likely to be first and foremost political, he had not given up his journalistic interests and pretensions, and he reinforced his connexion by marriage with the *Post* by regular free-lance work. He had surveyed the Parliamentary scene for a year under the pseudonym of ‘Back Bencher’, and also continued to contribute book reviews and art criticisms. In the summer of 1925, however, he applied to his father-in-law to be the *Yorkshire Post’s* representative to the Imperial Press Conference which was to be held in Melbourne in the forthcoming September. He was duly appointed, to the noticeable annoyance of one or two of the more regular members of the staff, who felt they had a prior claim to a world-trip on the paper’s behalf and at the paper’s expense.

For Eden the project was in itself attractive. The desire for travel which he had gratified while at the University, that had led him into half the capitals of Europe and as far afield as Constantinople and Teheran,¹ was strong within him and required fresh outlets. While politically he had not only a leaning towards first-hand information but also a real belief in the potentialities of a vigorous policy of Imperial development, it was only natural that he should put his ideas to the test by seeing the Empire for himself. He recorded his impressions in a series of articles

¹ The *New York Times* recalls a journey he made there immediately after the war with Sir Mark Sykes, the great free-lance diplomatist of the Sykes-Picot Agreement fame. I have been unable to obtain any further details of his associations with this almost legendary hero of the Near East, but it would seem that his politics developed as a sort of by-product of his wanderlust.

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for the *Post*, which were subsequently, with suitable additions and corrections, published in book-form by John Murray under the attractive title of *Places in the Sun*. This was to be Eden's one and only full-length literary effort. As a book it did not make a great sensation; it received the cursory attention of the back page of *The Times Literary Supplement* (among the selected 'also rans')—and this in spite of a preface contributed by the Prime Minister. The truth is that as a contribution either to political thought or to literature *Places in the Sun* was rather a trivial affair. It had no real construction, but was written in a grandiloquent manner. Right through its hundred and forty-three pages there is to be found an intense straining after stylistic effect, but as a rule the phrases are too dressed-up to suit the ideas. Nor is it wholly clear whether the book is intended primarily to be a glorified Baedeker, an immigration tract, or an essay on Imperial Preference. It is on the whole an uneasy compromise.

In this work, as in all his public life, Eden is obviously struggling to suppress the outward signs of egotism and substitute for them the appearance of detachment that comes from persistent fact-finding. It is a useful method politically, as it tends to give an aura of authority to an opinion which it might otherwise lack. The importance of *Places in the Sun* for us is that it is yet another of Eden's experiments in self-expression, and that, while valuable as hinting at a new Conservative approach to Imperialism, it brings to a decorous end Eden's somewhat casual and unco-ordinated journalistic ambitions.

Stanley Baldwin in his preface was polite. 'I feel sure that the articles from the pen of Captain Anthony Eden, M.P., republished in this volume will be widely read, as they deserve to be . . . '—but through the politeness there was a gleam of appreciation—'We may not all agree with

every one of Captain Eden's, or with all his conclusions, but we shall at least agree that he is a shrewd observer. . . .’ ‘I am convinced,’ the Prime Minister added, ‘that for the development of our great inheritance on right lines there is no factor so important as co-operation based on mutual knowledge, and there is no adequate substitute for the knowledge which comes from travel and personal contact. Only by getting together can we understand and appreciate each other's point of view; and for none is it more important than for members of our Legislature to acquire this first-hand knowledge.’ The whole of Eden's career has borne witness to this generous, if typical Baldwinian sentiment; but Baldwin was never able to take his own advice to the full, and never got nearer to Geneva than Aix-les-Bains.

Eden's grand tour was with the sun, across Canada, then from Vancouver to New Zealand by way of Honolulu and Fiji; then to Australia, to which the main body of the book is devoted, ending with a highly coloured and effective vignette of Ceylon. At the very beginning of his introduction he emphasizes the outlook round which the whole controversy over his idealism has centred, but which has none the less been the secret of his dizzy ascent to power. So without ‘but’ or ‘if’—‘the twentieth century is a century of world politics. The fencings of the nineteenth century, admirably adapted to the pages of a history-book, are broken down. We can cozen ourselves no longer. The politics of the Pacific are not one whit less important to Great Britain than the politics of the English Channel. We have to stretch our text-books. The world is the British people's stage; we have to span it and to focus it. Even in these days of easy and rapid travel the task is not inconsiderable.’ This is as much a statement of fact and faith as Adolf Hitler's belief in Race; and it must be confessed that Eden has based his career upon it with a similarly intense consistency.

His account of Canada is confined to one or two scenic effects and a plea for immigration. He at once submits to the magic of the journey up the St. Lawrence to Quebec. 'It is misty as we approach the city; the vast expanse of the river is so smooth that the black smoke of a passing cargo-boat is reflected to its minutest detail on the glassy surface. Not a ripple, not a breath of air, a heavy grey sky overhead, and away to the right little puffs of white cloud rise like Jack-in-the-boxes from the very surface of the earth. A silence in which thought travels slowly. . . .' For the most part he sees a place more as a picture to paint than as a name to remember. His sense of atmosphere is to that extent incomplete. Always he is searching for the adjective of colour to precede the noun. For him Canada 'is a country of painter's skies. A vast stretch of sky overhead, cloudbanks grey and white, puffs of white cloud tinged with gold at the horizon, here and there a rift sufficient to reveal jagged fragments large or small of a translucent blue.' In fact, 'a sky to make a painter's palette itch.' Those who look upon his Majesty's late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as a good-looking young man about town, intelligent but essentially prosaic, will gain a very different impression from a brief study of *Places in the Sun* in which Captain Eden, twenty-nine years' old journalist, worships in extravagant terms at the shrine of majestic Nature.

Beyond Montreal he finds himself in a country of trees and lakes and boulders. 'Pine and fir and birch rule, with flowers blue and white in the undergrowth; sometimes the trees stand ranked in tiers above the water, shining in the strong sunlight, swaying and hesitating in the breeze like a crowd in the stadium at Wembley, or again upright and motionless as sentinels conscious of their trust. Fancy may linger here. A little log-cabin on the hillside, a wooden hut by the stream's-edge in the valley, a wooden church painted white surmounted by its cross, whiter still against

the green background.’ Then again it is the colour of the prairies rather than its teeming abundance that makes the immediate appeal to him. ‘At twilight a haze descends over the prairie, softening its contours, mellowing its varied hues. A lone road stretches into the distance, interminable until it is lost in the mist on the horizon. The air is fresh and very still. The rays of the setting sun slash the sky with orange and with gold. It is at this hour that man’s heart is made captive by the wizardry of the plains for ever.’ He sees Canada ‘reflected in the mirror of a passing train’, and ‘it is a picture sublime in colour and in composition’.

As for Canada’s migration problem he makes no particularly profound or original observation. By 1925 the drain of Canadian youth from Canada into the U.S.A. had reached alarming proportions. Eden inclined to the belief that the drain would continue during the next ten years, but that it would be a gradually diminishing force, until at the end of the period (perhaps even before) the tide would have turned. He seems to have based this estimate, which has been to a large extent vindicated, on the comfortable argument that Canada was pursuing a Conservative policy and so ‘husbanding her national resources’ while at the same time ‘not wasting her natural reserves’. This prophecy, after the manner of the Delphic oracle, was a sufficiently ambiguous definition of Conservatism to cover all consequences. Equally bland was his assertion that it is natural and welcome to us in the British Isles that Canada should first turn her eyes to the Mother Country, for she wants the best citizens she can get. But on the whole the lapses into Imperialist doggerel are few and far between.

Before leaving Canada for the Pacific voyage from Vancouver¹ to Auckland he noted that Canada was yet another country afflicted with alcoholic anomalies. ‘The unsuspect-

¹ A friend of mine records an impression of Eden at a public lunch in Vancouver as being ‘exquisitely dressed and profoundly bored’!

ing traveller may, if he is not warned, find obstacles in his search for the cup that cheers.' It is unlawful to have drinks with meals, though in the various towns various arrangements were made for drink in other places and at other times. 'Supposing that we admit', wrote Eden, 'in the guise of an "initiated observer"—for the sake of argument only, be it clearly understood—that the drinking of what is sometimes collectively called liquor—a terrible word!—is harmful, surely its worst and most insidious form is such drinking at other than meal-times. Moderation is then the less easy to practise, at least so we have been led to suppose, and the appetite is certainly less natural.'

But he soon was able to take his mind off these thirst-provoking thoughts. 'Soft days, now and again heavy and damp as we near the Equator, pale blue skies, with puffs of white cloud, coral-tipped at the horizon; the sea itself soft and caressing, deep in colour, glossy in surface.' Eden describes the Pacific as the 'silken sea', and once again makes obeisance before the glory of an Oriental sunset: 'to the last the sun asserts his sovereignty of the Pacific. Fair weather and a six-days' sail and we are at Honolulu for a few hours stay.' The dazzling surface beauty of this somewhat sinister paradise is more than the author's descriptive paeans can sustain. He seeks refuge in imperatives and inversions. 'Write me the word "flowers" the island over,'—and then, almost straight out of Kelly's 'Key to *Virgil*': 'On Waikiki beach rolls the surf. Let those ride it who can; it is a graceful art.'

He recognized, however, that the Hawaiian Islands had not, in spite of their extraneous reputation, the same authentic South Sea Island flavour as Fiji: Hawaii's population being forty per cent Japanese and only seven per cent native, while the native population of Fiji is over fifty per cent. Eden devotes a few pages to Fiji which he implies, with some justice, is one of the least-known corners of the British Empire. There are still, no doubt, a hundred people

who think Honolulu is British to one who knows where Suva is, but that the Fijians are Christians employing Indian Hindu labour; that sugar exports of Fiji over a period of ten years come to about the same as those of Trinidad and Barbados combined; that cotton, bananas, rice, and cacao are all potentially profitable products; that the climate is an idyll that never exceeds eighty in the shade, or falls below seventy, and which provides a rainfall heavy enough to save a planter the cost of any irrigation: these things were not generally known when Eden wrote his book, and Fiji is still as much an island of mystery to the British public now. But Eden, when he had paid his visit to Fiji, had reached the other side of the Imperial perimeter and discovered a plot ‘still unspoilt by corrugated iron and other blessings of civilization’. He urged that these primitive beauties be scrupulously preserved, and he warned the intending immigrant of the need for specialist knowledge and substantial capital.

The next two chapters Eden devoted to New Zealand—one a rather colourless and orthodox account of the island’s resources and prospects, and the other a quite lively description of the Parliament in action at Wellington. He noted that New Zealand had been more successful than certain other parts of the Empire in throwing off the effects of the post-war depression, although a tenth of her male population had been sent overseas during the war. He found that among British imports our cars were failing to hold their own against the American makes. It is a perennial grievance. ‘The lower clearance and the smaller power of the English car are said to be its chief handicaps. New Zealanders assured us that they would rather buy an English car if they could be convinced of its adaptability to conditions in the Dominion’.

Eden’s stay at Auckland coincided with a visit from a

section of the American Fleet, but the sun had set a few hours before his arrival 'to shade from us the first impression of these great battleships in Auckland's beautiful harbour.' 'Governor Hobson, to whom the choice of the site and the foundation of the city is due, made no mistake . . . while the view from Mount Eden overlooking the city and harbour is deserving of its world-wide renown'. In discussing New Zealand's affinity with the Mother Country the author significantly refrained from any comment as to his emotion on seeing for the first time the titles of his family encircling the earth in the place-names of the Commonwealth.

New Zealand's climate bears a dangerously close relation to ours, and Eden reports that during their short stay (admittedly it was winter-time) the rain was almost continuous. But New Zealand has unique compensations. 'We saw something of the thermal wonders of Rotarua and Warraki geysers throwing jets of water fifty feet into the air, pools of bubbling boiling sulphur, grey-green flopping mud, valleys steaming with the smoke of countless sulphur springs and cauldrons. We bathed and swam in the cold of early morning in winter out of doors in a sulphur pool, so hot as to be hardly bearable, and tropical vegetation drooped to the water's-edge'. Eden praised the system of immigration by nomination as applied to New Zealand. Expensive land and the relatively high population made it essential, in his opinion. The advantages he felt were self-apparent. 'The immigrant is assured of a helping hand in his new home, and is able to assure himself, through his nominator, of work and opportunities such as he desires before he embarks. The peril of square pegs in round holes is thereby reduced to a minimum.' For Mr. Coates—who had at that time just succeeded to the Premiership following the death of the revered Imperialist, Mr. Massey—Eden expressed warm admiration; 'none can meet him without being impressed by his energy and force of

character. The destinies of his country are safe in his keeping’.

In 1926 the Parliament Buildings at Wellington were incomplete; but Eden, though he missed ‘swete Thames’ equivalent, found the approach more commanding than that of Westminster. ‘We are met by a dignitary with all the grace and heraldry of his counterpart in our own House. We are led, with the necessary circumstance instilling awe, to seats of honour, those of us who are members of the Imperial Parliament, on the Speaker’s left on the floor of the House. We murmur our thanks for so graceful a compliment. We bow, we take our seats. We sit up, we rub our eyes, we pinch ourselves. We look at each other questioningly. Is this, in fact, New Zealand? Are we quite sure? Confidence has flown, we clutch reality’. Actually among English-speaking people it is what one might have expected, but Eden’s description loses nothing in the telling. ‘On our right Mr. Speaker reclines in chair and wig and gown, as majestic and commanding a figure as ever awed presumption in any other place. Within the orbit of that eye can none sustain a vagary and few coquet it. Under him a table upon which lies the mace, the very bauble to the very Oliver, and at which sit the clerks to whom are added (a departure this from ancestral custom) the recording scribes of Hansard. The House is spread horseshoe-shape before Mr. Speaker: the Government on his right, the Opposition on his left, divided into two sections, and all upon Time’s honoured plan. Above are the public galleries, admirably constructed for the convenience of their occupants, and where the listeners may hear (another departure this from the Mother of Parliaments) every word that is vouchsafed below.’

Two other amenities peculiar to New Zealand’s parliamentary procedure impressed Eden—settees and desks. ‘The members do not seem uncomfortable or unconscious, the twin states between which a British Member of Parlia-

ment alternates', because 'every member is seated in pampered luxury in a deep settee: no tired twenty years of back bench work to secure a stringy skeleton, but a stout well-padded arm on which Morpheus may conquer memory. Before him is a desk laden with pens . . .'—and so on, in the same vein. But he recognized that 'however much we may envy their comfort we appreciate that it can never be ours to share'. These concessions are possible only when the number of members is sufficiently small. Many ask how Parliament's business can be carried on when it is so 'cabin'd and confined' as at Westminster; but the answer, of course, is that effective debate can only be carried on at short range. If the building is too palatial the essentially cellular corporate aspect of our parliamentary institutions is lost.

Apart from the desks Eden was forced to admit how alike it all was. 'Shut your eyes and lean back and you may hear the Opposition complain how the Government has failed to carry out when in power the policy it preached when in Opposition; how its outlook and its opinions have changed since it changed benches. You may hear the Government's supporters challenging "And what did you do?" You may hear the Government's defence that, whatever their shortcomings, the last who has a right to challenge them on this score, or on that, is the very Opposition which, when it was in power . . . The spirit has travelled and will endure. . . .' Let it be admitted that Eden has caught the atmosphere in which it moves and has its being.

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The rest of the book, save for the epilogue on Ceylon, is concerned with Australia—and lacks distinction. Some of his generalizations are wild, some of his facts wobbly. Thus even in 1926 to assert, as he does in his opening sentence, that 'New South Wales typifies Australia' is to provoke the ridicule of Australians and to beg more questions than

it answers. His information that the arch-span of Sydney Bridge will be the longest in the world is inaccurate. But once again his descriptive powers come to the rescue, and his impression of the Blue Mountains must bring back to many a deep vision of their hazy grandeur: ‘ No vigour in movement or design; Nature is in no hurry here. They stretch themselves in easy undulations, laying bare their wooded vales, and the deeper shadows of the clouds impress. The waterfalls caress the rocks as they glide down in silence. . . . Seen through the drooping foliage the mountains are a rich soft blue against the sky at sunset; the rocks are picked out gold by the rays of the sun, and the air is blue. The grace of mountain scenery without its rugged vigour of outline and, mercifully, without snow—splendid, listless, colourful ’.

Where Eden fails is in efforts to drag in Imperial Preference by the heels. Thus he begins an interesting account of a cannery set up at Leith which at the time of his visit was shipping 125,000 dozen tins of canned fruit to Great Britain. He rounds it off with: ‘ A voluntary preference for Dominion fruits can assure the future of this industry in which so many ex-Servicemen are engaged. Will you ask for Empire fruits? ’ This appeal is somewhat trite even in a newspaper article, but to incorporate it in a book suggests a certain insensitiveness towards the subtle art of literary propaganda. Also he makes on occasions rather blatant use of the blind eye. ‘ There is some political criticism in Australia to-day of the large estates, but it may be doubted whether it is in the national interest to decentralize to any great extent. This, however, is for Australians.’ On the other hand a whole chapter is devoted to sugar and Socialism, and Queensland’s embarrassingly successful experiment in Labour government is subjected to more searching scrutiny.

‘ Probably no portion of the British Empire ’, he says, ‘ has made so many legislative experiments. Upon their

wisdom opinion is naturally divided. The Second Chamber has been abolished, and we did not discern that legislation was considered at too great a length. The State owns and controls the railways (some might add, subject to the railwaymen's control of the State, reminiscent of the mutual swallowing of two cobras: we begin by the tail); subsidizes certain of the mining industries; owns some of the mines, and indulges in a variety of trading activities from cattle-stations to fish-shops. Our Victorian tradition dictates that the function of government is to govern not to trade. Queensland strengthens tradition.' He pointed to accumulated loss on these State enterprises, the bulk of which was incurred by the State cattle-stations—this industry has suffered from fluctuations of price in the world market which explains, but does not excuse, the above figures. And let it not be forgotten that these enterprises pay no income-tax, either State or Federal; nor, we believe, do they pay any local taxation.

'This at least may be said, not in justification but in palliation: these ventures, and others which we cannot approve, can be practised in Queensland with less danger perhaps than in any other part of the world.' The sheep has a broad and strong back: 'maybe he needs it in Queensland'. And so to the parting shot: Queensland's resources are abundant and untapped. Her primary needs are men and capital; but 'capital will not be attracted where legislation is so unfettered, so restless, so quixotic and so costly.' The moral of which is that only Conservatism can supply the capital that supplies the confidence; and that Britons never shall be slaves so long as Baldwin is at the helm.

Victoria he summarized under the heading of 'Wool, Wheat, and Brown Coal'. While discussing this last phenomenon he mentioned the great power-house built at Yallourn, near the brown coal mines. Here was State-ownership to which no exception could be taken, for the Electricity Commission was 'under the able and imaginative



COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Eden signing the Mediterranean Pact at Nyon on September 14th, 1937

On the left : Admiral Lord Chatfield (First Sea Lord), and on right : Sir Robert Vansittart

chairmanship of Sir John Monash, whose name is remembered in England as the brilliant commander of the Australian Forces on the Western Front during the later stages of the War. Victoria owes much to Sir John Monash; the British Empire is his debtor also’.

Eden’s comments on Melbourne’s æsthetic claims are interesting. ‘The main thoroughfares (he writes) are set wide and straight to cut each other at right angles. A dweller in Melbourne might wish the architect had once lost his set-square. Symmetry is the curse of modern decoration.’ He refers to the enterprising mathematician who has reckoned that there is ‘one race-course to every fifteen Australians’, and aptly dubs horse-racing in Australia ‘a primary industry’. He did not fail either to make his pilgrimage to Melbourne’s National Gallery. Here is to be found ‘one of the best collections of pictures in the Southern Hemisphere; a little gem of Van Eyck, and perhaps an old friend from England.’

Of Tasmania he has nothing but commonplace impressions. He admired the National Park, referred to its ‘sanctuaries of solace and halidomes of ease’, and deplored the Navigation Act, quoting the report of a commission of inquiry which asserted that it involved a most serious threat to Tasmania’s ‘present and future solvency’. Upon Canberra he contributed little more than a note, though the reference has a certain historical interest. Australia’s capital was being built when Eden saw it, and the Governor-General was expected to take up his residence some time in 1926. ‘With this end in view some 2,500 workmen are at work in Canberra to-day’.

His essay on South Australia had in it most of the material to be found in a good handbook. He was careful to point out that although more than half of the State’s meagre population lived in Adelaide, the impression given by this fact was not wholly fair, as a considerable number of the city’s metropolitan inhabitants were engaged in agri-

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culture 'somewhere on the rich and fertile soil that on three sides girdles Adelaide'. He noted also what to-day has an extremely topical interest—the small clans of Germans who live just outside Adelaide, descendants of German settlers who went out to the colony in 1840. 'In some cases they are still in groups and villages, and may be seen where German names strike the eye strangely on door-posts or over shop windows.' 'These descendants', Eden adds, 'of German forefathers, make excellent settlers, thrifty and hard-working.'

Since 1926 Adelaide has undergone considerable development, but Eden's general verdict at that time still catches the spirit of the place. It did not create to him 'the impression of a busy, hustling capital, but rather of some modern university town.' Once again Eden unashamedly propagates Imperial Preference. 'On all hands, and wherever we travelled, we found appreciation deep and sincere for the preference granted to dried fruits within the Empire in the Budget of 1925. If to the fiscal preference the British consumer will add a personal preference; if the British public will ask for Australian or South African citrus and dried fruits, it will be purchasing articles produced under ideal conditions by men who have served the Empire well, and whose future is to a large extent dependent upon the home consumer's decision.'

Eden undertook the great train journey to the West and missed the notorious rigours of the Australian Bight, but by land, as he justly pointed out, there are formidable preliminaries. There is the twelve-hour journey from Adelaide to Port Augusta before the dusty trek of 1,050 miles from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie begins, and thereafter no river or stream is crossed; and for well over eight hundred miles there is only one known source of water, and no settlement of any kind. But Eden's artistic eye soon discovered compensations in all the vast loneliness. 'As the night draws on, twilight lingers after sunset; the graceful stems, the

‘ PLACES IN THE SUN ’

tufted tops of the tall gum trees, a dark blue-green against a cloudless sky, a clear and brilliant evening light, the grey-green salt bush a lighter undergrowth, opal tints above the skyline—long ago in Lombardy.’

Coolgardie he found ‘almost a dead city, and although Kalgoorlie and Boulder were more fortunate and were still busy centres, their future seemed to him to be highly uncertain for, unlike Ballarat and the other gold cities, they were surrounded by barren waste and had no green pastures on which to rely when the gold output died down. Nevertheless Eden was favourably impressed with the surprising progress made in the supply of civilized amenities. ‘The provision of water for towns in this waterless plain has been courageously achieved.’ In the early days water had been more difficult to get than whisky. ‘To-day a race-course embowered in flowers, a park, a swimming-bath, lawns and gardens, testify to a supply abundant for immediate needs.’ He saw much, and what he saw he found intrinsically good.

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Four short chapters were included of a more general and reflective character which had not appeared previously in the Press, and in their estimates of Australia’s government problems, younger generation, fiscal policy, and future as a whole, save the book from the order of purely ephemeral things.

He faced fairly the hoary complaint that Australia is afflicted with a plethora of parliaments. Australians and citizens of the Mother Country are apt to overlook the overwhelming fact that the Empire is not so much a Commonwealth of Nations as an Alliance of Continents. Australia’s thirteen legislatures is not an excessive number to cover a continent, and again, the ratio of parliaments to population is counteracted by the particular problems of dispersion. Eden pointed out justly that although the Australian is in-

evitably more widely travelled than the average Englishman, yet his knowledge of Australia will not extend far beyond the boundaries of his own State. But still he detected that with the improvement in communications—the growth in the popularity of civil aviation and the acceptance of a rational railway-gauge system—‘Australia may find it economic and convenient to allocate to the Federal Government some of the functions to-day discharged by State Governments.’ Here was the problem for the statesmanship of the future. He recognized the difficulties and expense involved in the task of co-ordinating the railway gauges, but he urged that the sooner this handicap was eliminated the greater would be the long-term benefit to the people and to the trade and commerce of Australia.

During Eden’s visit the Federal elections were in progress, and for the first time in Australian history the voting was compulsory. He quotes Mr. Bruce as saying: ‘You have called upon us on washing-day’. Eden found that opinion on the experiment was divided, and that the majority seemed content to judge by results. He did not believe the experiment would affect one party’s fortunes at the expense of another, but he was convinced that whatever its merits for Australia ‘it would not be popular and is not necessary in this country’ where the facilities are greater and a goad would but prove an irritant. Finally, among the problems of government, Eden noted a more persistent demand that State Government should be Australian-born, but (and Eden throughout this book constantly falls back on the pompous plural) ‘we shared regret to see the change’. In his view they served a double function—while on duty as liaison officers and when retired as ‘invaluable and experienced protagonists of Australia and her people at home’, to correct false impressions, and to supply first-hand information.

His chapter on the younger generation is rousing stuff, and full of genuine sentiment. He felt that the Australian

had a more sombre picture in his mind of the future of Great Britain than the facts warrant. British self-deprecation has made itself felt even among Britishers. But gloomy forebodings must be put aside. He dealt firmly with the criticisms that Australian youth lives only for pleasure. Let us beware of jaundice and sour grapes. ‘In Australia the climate calls for recreation; the sun shines and the surf calls, and if there be no over-indulgence there cannot but be gain to the health and to the physique of the nation from a response to that call.’ Ambition was the younger generation’s safeguard against over-indulgence. ‘We have never met a more ambitious people. The goal that many set themselves is to make Australia for future generations what England is to-day’—the heart and chief centre of the Empire. Eden boldly asserted that it was by no means impossible of achievement. ‘The day may come when Australia will hold a population many times as large as that of these islands.’ But for the attainment of that objective it was essential that Australia ‘should overcome the difficulties in keeping contact with the political changes and orientation of the outside world.’ Eden was alarmed at the mental isolation arising out of her overwhelming geographical isolation. It is not healthy. ‘It will surprise the traveller from England to find how little the average Australian knows, for instance of India and of its problems, or of other parts of the Empire. Still less does he know of the politics of Europe. Even the intercourse between Australia and New Zealand is slight.’

Ten years of wireless have, of course, intervened to modify this alarm. But Eden makes it clear that he was alive in 1926 to the implications of a new Imperialism in the domain of post-war international relations. There is a fundamental consistency in his thought. ‘Let it be said, and with emphasis,’ he writes in a compelling passage, ‘that it is impossible to visit Australia or New Zealand, or any other Dominion, without being deeply

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impressed by the need for a closer co-operation in our Imperial foreign policy. The need becomes every day more apparent. The affairs of Europe are our pre-occupation, those of the Pacific are Australia's, those of Suez and of Singapore must engage us both and jointly and continuously with the other partners in our Imperial heritage. The mechanism of closer co-ordination may be difficult to evolve; the form is of less importance than the substance.

Eden was equally decisive on the vexed question of Australia's protectionist policy. 'Critics may take any line they choose', but Australia 'will never be content to limit her industrial life to supplying England with her primary products and accepting manufactured goods in exchange.' On the assumption that Australia's market was an expanding one he dismissed the fear that the hot-house development of Australia's secondary industries might involve a catastrophic decrease in imports from this country. If Australia makes her own shoes her shoemakers must be clothed was the burden of his temperate protectionism. He felt that Australia was more strongly actuated by the motive of Australian goods first, Imperial goods next, and all else after, than Great Britain was by the reciprocal ideal. To encourage his British readers into the paths of righteousness and compound interest he pointed out 'there is sentiment in business. Foster it.' Reluctantly he felt bound to consider import statistics, and found alarming evidence of an American invasion. The principal category was cars, although Ford to the best of his belief was operating through Canada, and 'we travelled to the Murray Settlements from Adelaide to Renmark and other places in Austin cars, the property of the South Australian Government, and they behaved excellently.' He emphasized the criticism, with which he came into frequent contact, that British manufacturers as a whole were not sufficiently alive to the peculiar needs of the Australian purchaser, and he suggested the remedy, which Lord Nuffield has followed

up with such impressive results, that British firms should not rely too much upon agents, however excellent, but that the heads of firms should at regular intervals of time visit the Commonwealth personally, because ‘trade follows knowledge, and bickering is the child of ignorance.’

As for the future Eden confined himself to observations sufficiently general to be safe. He judged the ‘white Australia’ policy to be right and inevitable, but he recognized that it involved great responsibilities which the world sooner or later will ask to see discharged. ‘A population of less than six millions is no corollary to a White Australia policy.’ Immigration must be explained, encouraged, and co-ordinated. It is the duty of Great Britain to help Australia find markets, the duty of Australia to give British immigrants the warmest of welcomes at the beginning of their new life. ‘To expunge the “Pommy” would deprive the Australian vocabulary of no grace.’

He had high hopes of Australia’s cultural prospects, although he deplored the pervasive influence of the American film, which inevitably habituates the spectator to American habits, tastes, and prejudices. On the other hand he paid fitting tribute to the astonishingly high standard of Australian journalism. He found a town with a population of eight hundred in a district with a population of under three thousand carrying a newspaper published twice a week; while there was another town of less than twenty-five thousand in a district of forty-eight thousand inhabitants supporting a daily morning paper, two evening papers, and three weeklies. Every kind of specialist interest had full journalistic representation. ‘If the vigour and enterprise of public thought is to be measured by the variety and range of the Press which it supports, then that of Australia need not fear the test.’ In as far as industrial disputes were ‘expensive luxuries’ and Socialism an extravaganza in government, Eden was not troubled by the rocks on the course or the thorns in the path of Australia’s future great-

ness. Interdependence was the lesson, the cellular growth of Empire was the sign of success in the modern world. 'Unity must be made to live and to grow and must become so real as to be instinctive, so complete as to be imperceptible.'

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The journey ends with 'words of personal experience' of Ceylon written by Eden for the benefit of those whose knowledge of the island is confined to a few hours at Colombo, and to the myriads who are 'constrained to limit their travel to the arm-chair and the mind'. He took the road to Kandy and to the shrine sheltering one of the teeth of the Buddha. At last he finds a theme sufficiently aromatic to blend with his heavily scented style of writing. 'We make our pilgrimage to the temple as darkness falls. The kindness of the librarian shows us some manuscripts in palm leaf of great beauty and rarity, and his even greater consideration allows us to view the scene below from the balcony. The drums are playing within the temple court summoning to worship. The air is close and very still; it is raining softly but heavily. A mist enshrouds the hill-tops that loom across the lake, the palm-trees linger over the water's edge, drooping their tufted heads gracefully to the rippleless surface. The monotonous refrain of the drums within vies with the trilling of the cricket without. Twilight deepens into darkness. We are of no age and no time. The drums grow louder.

'We are summoned to the shrine set within a temple gracefully proportioned and beautiful in the dim light. The drums grow louder yet. The shrine itself is bejewelled with emeralds and rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones, and strewn with the flowers of devotees. There is no blend of fanatical bigotry here, but a sincere devotion, a welcome and a peace. We think of the representation of punishments waiting the sinner depicted on the wall under the

colonnade without; but Buddhism is not a religion of menaces, of worldliness, or revenge. The drums cease.’

He went deeper into antiquity and penetrated dead and mysterious cities: Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Sigiriya. The road to these cities offered all the extravagant manifestations of the jungle, the abundance of life and colour. ‘We overtake a fishing party returning with a fine catch and carrying the fish suspended on poles across bare and glistening shoulders, as the Biblical illustrations of our childhood represent the spies returning with grapes from the Promised Land.’ He saw the five temples at Dambulla carved out of the rocks; in one of them are grouped fifty-eight statues of the Buddha, each more than life-sized. Polonnaruwa, which flourished between the eighth and fourteenth centuries A.D., fascinated Eden with its utter loneliness. ‘No guides to pester, no children to chatter, no beggars to beg . . . a deserted city still: long may it so remain.’ At the rest-house was a magnificent artificial lake wreathed in trees, and Eden noted that the Sinhalese well understand the decorative effect of water.

He saw at Polonnaruwa the great Gal Vihare, giant statues carved out of the rocks to which Buddhists the world over come to worship. ‘The main figures of the hewn group are of the Buddha prostrate and attaining Nirvana, huge but graceful; and at his head his disciple Ananda, with face and bearing expressive of poignant grief.’ ‘Again’, Eden adds, ‘it is the setting, the unexpectedness of the giant carvings that frame their contemplative beauty in the memory. Ceylon is an island of meditation.’ At Anuradhapura: ‘Evening falls, and fireflies tremble like myriad stars in the dense foliage.’ Again he stands in awe before great monuments, ‘most of them overgrown with foliage and resembling the dome of some giant cathedral severed and growing from the ground’.

But the idyll must end, and the road back to Colombo be taken. The last impression is of the villages along that

road. 'Under a veranda an old man, with a long white beard and dressed in a piece of cloth and a pair of spectacles, is reading the newspaper. At another village a wedding is in progress: flags decorate the street and gossips stand at their doors, expectant as in any other land to see the bridal couple pass. . . A broad, slow, sluggish thick brown river; the smell of the sea . . . Colombo and the West.'

Chapter VII

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LOCARNO LIMITED

EDEN WAS back in the House of Commons by the beginning of December but did not take part in a debate until the day before the session ended. The occasion was a motion by the Prime Minister to approve the League of Nation's awards on the vexed question of the 'Iraq boundary. A debate in the full Parliamentary sense of that word it was not, because Labour members took the unusual course of walking out of the House to mark their disapproval of a resolution on high policy brought forward too late for proper consideration or the drafting of any amendment. *The Times* did not take a charitable view of their action, claimed that it was carefully planned and was the outcome of a purely party dilemma. Labour could not vote against the motion without impairing the League's authority, and could not vote for it without approving the Government's 'Iraq policy. Actually the position was not quite so straightforward: Labour was being asked to approve the 'Iraq resolution under the shadow of a great rebuff.

The rejection of the Geneva Protocol brought up the whole question of commitments, and to Labour the Conservative Government's very support of the League was double-minded and half-hearted. For in Eden's absence there had been tremendous developments. Detailed negotiations had produced the historic Locarno Treaty: a League within a League had been created. The objective was no longer to try and cover all possible wars and insure against the distant future, but to render difficult a particular war between France and Germany in the next few years. To the upholders of the Geneva Protocol, Locarno was a great betrayal. It was an impossible compromise between Col-

lective Security and the Grand Alliance. On the one hand Great Britain refused to confirm liabilities undertaken in the Covenant in Eastern Europe, while on the other hand the principle of reciprocity was violated. Great Britain was not to receive, under Locarno, assistance from Germany or France if attacked by either of those nations. The limitations of Locarno had been laid down by Mr. Baldwin as early as 8th October in a speech to the Conservative Party Conference at Brighton when he declared that it would have to be bilateral and purely defensive in character, and that any new obligation undertaken by Britain would have to be pacific and limited to the frontier between Germany and her western neighbours. In the same speech he had referred to 'Iraq and forecast the Government's acquiescence in the League Commissioners' report.

At the beginning of December the League Council, having decided to become arbitrator between Great Britain and Turkey, gave its unanimous award on the status of the Mosul and of the Straits. It declared that the provisional boundary called the Brussels Line should become definitively the northern frontier of the British Mandate of 'Iraq, provided that Great Britain within six months assumed responsibility for 'Iraq for another twenty-five years, or less, if 'Iraq should be judged by the Council to have been qualified for membership of the League. Sir Austen Chamberlain took up a conciliatory attitude towards Turkey, and said he would be glad to enter into conversations with their Government in the hope that relations between the two countries might be made easier and safer.

While Sir Austen Chamberlain and the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Amery) were at Geneva Mr. Baldwin faced a battery of questions from both sides of the House, which expressed concern about our 'Iraq Mandate. He promised to provide an opportunity for discussing it as soon as Mr. Amery returned, but it was the form he gave to this opportunity—namely, that of a motion expressing formal approval

of the British action in accepting the League Council's award—which gave rise to Labour's anger and ultimate abstention. They were not placated by his promise, which he fulfilled, to submit the Treaty in its completed form to the House in the coming session. Emaciated though the debate was through Labour's action, it is important not only as showing Baldwin's skill in the arts of conciliation, but as marking a rise in Eden's Parliamentary status, for he was the first Government spokesman after the Prime Minister.

Keeping in mind the implications of Locarno as against the Geneva Protocol, Baldwin's speech is a characteristic effort, deceptive in its simplicity, double-minded in its allegiance. He defended his motion chiefly for its loyalty to the League. He pointed out that the undertaking to accept the League award had been given in the first instance by Lord Curzon at Lausanne. It did not represent a particular policy adopted for this particular dispute, but was 'merely one instance of the application of a principle to which all parties have been committed ever since the Covenant of the League of Nations was included in the Treaty of Versailles—I mean the principle of extending the use of the League of Nations as an instrument of the peaceful settlement of international difference, and strengthening by our support its authority for that purpose.' Then follows a passage, forgotten now, but which contains within it all the seeds of subsequent ambiguities from Manchuria to Spain and Czechoslovakia: 'Right hon. members who recently were sitting opposite'—(a perfect Parliamentary thrust this)—'were prepared to give that principle a much wider application than we believe to be practicable. They were ready to enter into a Protocol by which they would have engaged this country not only to submit all possible disputes of its own to arbitration but also to go to war with any other country which did not fulfil a similar obligation, however remote the conflict might be from any conceivable British interests. We have been less ambitious, but we have

in the Treaty of Locarno applied the same principle to the settlement of all possible disputes affecting a particular frontier in which we are profoundly interested.' Baldwin had thus already supplied the explanation of his famous but cryptic utterance that our frontier is the Rhine ten years before making it. It meant simply limited liability.

The rest of his speech was mainly concerned with rebutting charges made in the increasingly hostile Beaverbrook Press. The feud between Baldwin and the Press Barons was on, and in so far as Eden looked to the Prime Minister for advancement and salvation, he was not a candidate for honours with the *Daily Mail* or *Express*. Baldwin answered the assertion, made in these gospels of isolation that we were pledged to evacuate 'Iraq by 1928, by pointing out that the existing Protocol provided for the conclusion at its expiry of a fresh agreement which might prolong the Mandate. It was too late to say that the Mandate was an error of judgment. Once accepted no mandatory was entitled simply to throw up the Mandate and leave chaos in place of it. Finally he repeated his wish for friendship with Turkey, and said he was going to give effect to it by meeting the Turkish Ambassador the next day. Mr. Runciman followed with some general questions whose character, as *The Times* suggested, 'depends on the tone in which they are uttered'. Did Lausanne tally with the decision of the League? Was not a relationship with 'Iraq 'a special responsibility'? What were the General Staff's views? He wanted a more concrete definition of what we understood by our Mandate. 'Therefore', says *The Times*, 'one by one members rose and underlined the Prime Minister's points. Captain Eden, who is too rarely heard, added expert testimony to the difficulties of 'Iraq, which included an imported form of government, and he won manifest approval by his suggestion that a high diplomatic envoy should be sent to Angora.'

During his speech—the first to be reported fully in *The Times*—Eden urged that although it might seem to be a paradox yet the very extension of the maximum period of our Mandate was the best evidence of the likelihood of an early curtailment of our responsibilities in that country. Once again he stressed the pervading importance of prestige; ‘if we were to scuttle now like flying curs at the sight of our own shadow, our name would be a gibe in the mouth of every tavern-lounger from Marakish to Singapore. It might take centuries to recover our prestige.’ He recalled an Eastern proverb which claimed that bravery consists of ten parts, and that one part consists in running away and the other nine consist in never coming in sight of the enemy. Excellent though the advice was, our name in the East must not be associated with it. It was all as Mr. Baldwin’s cousin, Rudyard Kipling, would have wished. He was suitably sceptical of the wisdom of trying to set up democratic institutions in Eastern countries. With us Democracy was ‘a plant of natural growth’. In the East it was ‘a forced growth, an importation, and foreign to the soil’. We had asked a great deal of ‘Iraq: ‘what I believe even a Western nation in their position could not have done.’ In fairness, the country must be given full time to adapt itself to our democratic peculiarities. In any case we had an overwhelming duty to protect the Christian minorities in ‘Iraq. Where was the voice of Liberalism on this issue? How many Liberal majorities had been returned to Parliament on a wave of popular indignation! But if we should stand by ‘Iraq we should also hold out the hand of friendship and conciliation to Turkey.

After reference to diplomatic representation in Angora, which was loudly cheered, he went on to say that there were only two forces encouraging the Turks to foolish actions. ‘One of these is the agents of the Bolshevik Government of Russia, and the other—I have no doubt from different motives—is a section of our own Press.

That is, indeed, an unholy alliance; a marriage-bed upon which even the most hardened of us must blush to look. (Laughter.) Are we to see Bolsheviks perusing the columns of the *Daily Express* and noble lords hustling to Fleet Street in Russian boots? Our Turkish friends should be assured that that section of the Press did not in any sense represent the voice of the country—a comment which brought cheers and no doubt gratitude in the quarters for which it was intended. Encouraged, he did not mince his words. ‘The hand may be the hand of Esau, but the voice is quite undoubtedly the voice of Jacob; and if anything were to go wrong with Anglo-Turkish relations the responsibility must rest in a very large measure upon those organs of the Press which have been carrying out so unscrupulous a propaganda. There are some sacrifices which cannot in honour be made even upon the altar of circulation.’ Once again cheers; and with his conclusion—a plea for goodwill all round—Captain Eden had scored quite an impressive debating success.

To intervene in Mr. Baldwin’s conflict with Lord Beaverbrook was in terms of self-interest perhaps strategy rather than tactics: but his attack was robust and had the ring of conviction about it. It should perhaps be noted here that if Eden’s rise to power is a dizzy and almost unprecedented advance yet it was achieved without any assistance from Fleet Street. He provided neither copy nor articles nor compliments. At no stage did he see fit to parade his personality. Instead he deliberately hid his light under Baldwin’s bushel. In this debate he gave the lead to warm support for the Government’s Mosul policy in general and for the Prime Minister in particular. He had played an important part in silencing rumours of a Conservative revolt.

During the vacation the talks inaugurated by Mr. Baldwin with the Turkish Ambassador were continued; the Turkish Government smiled upon them, and it was finally

agreed that Sir Ronald Lindsay (the British Ambassador to Turkey) should go to Angora for discussions with the Turkish Foreign Minister. In addition, the Anglo-'Iraq treaty, which provided for an extension of the British Mandate up to a further twenty-five years, was signed in Baghdad with no protest from Turkey. On 18th February Mr. Amery asked the House to approve the Treaty. Once again Mr. Eden intervened as the expert addressing novices. He dealt with the problem of 'Iraq's potential oil wealth, one of those 'relevant but subsidiary' questions which made it so difficult for the House to come to a decision on the Treaty: 'Some hon. members think there is something sinister about these oil companies, but they provide no evidence.' The House was not the right place for propaganda without facts to back it. 'I cannot speak with any knowledge of what is going on in Mexico, but I can speak in regard to what the Anglo-Persian Oil Company have been doing in Persia because I have seen it.' He called it a great humanizing work. He poured scorn on the references of a Labour member to vamped-up charges about the persecution of Christian minorities, and pointed out that the speaker had confused the Assyrian Christians with the Chaldean Catholics.

He suggested that the Government should consider the possibility of granting a loan to 'Iraq to enable her to develop her resources, as the more we increased the prosperity of that country the sooner we would be relieved of the financial burdens in respect of it. He referred to the remarkable developments that had recently taken place in Persia 'under a very able, imaginative, and courageous ruler'. The effect of the Treaty, he felt, would be to add considerably to the trade between Persia and 'Iraq. He believed that this burden of the duties which 'Iraq was placing on Persian trade passing through 'Iraq was pressing heavily on Persian commerce. Accordingly 'Iraq should be very careful not to make that burden so heavy

that Persia develops her own port on the Persian Gulf and her own route to Persia. Were that to happen 'Iraq would certainly suffer.' Once again he pressed for a diplomatic representative in Angora. 'Constantinople is not, and never was, the heart of Turkey. The heart of Turkey to-day is at Angora; and for a British representative to be at Constantinople to-day is about as futile as it would be for a foreign representative in this country to be stationed at, say, Glasgow.' Without the goodwill of Turkey nothing could be done for the Christian minorities under Turkish rule. He made two other weighty points in this trenchant and well-informed speech. In the first place, the impression in foreign countries that we had secured by the League award that 'Iraq had her own way, was not true. 'If 'Iraq had received the award she wanted she would have secured certain valleys where the Assyrians could have returned to their own homes. The present boundary does not allow that, nor has it solved the Kurdish problem. . . .

'Finally, I would ask the House to remember that if one looks back through Arabian history one finds this very curious fact: that the Arabs have never reached the full extent of their powers except in contact with another people. It was contact with the Persians that resulted in the epoch of Hârûn al Raschid of the *Arabian Nights*, of the glories of which we read in our childhood. It was contact with the inhabitants of Spain that resulted in the Moorish dynasty in Spain. It may be that contact with the Kurds will have the same result in 'Iraq to-day.' Sir Austen Chamberlain, in winding up the debate for the Government, underlined several of Eden's arguments and made much of the oil myth. British altruism was described when, as *The Times* put it: 'Sir Austen, as he narrated in a most interesting passage, last year rejected on plain grounds of dignity and consistent policy a Turkish offer of a deal over 'Iraq based on the assumption that oil was all we cared for.' The motion for accepting the Treaty was finally carried, after

some piquant observations by the notorious Mr. Saklatvala and the obscure Mr. Attlee, by 260 votes to 116.

Eden did not allow the question of diplomatic representation at Angora to drop: a month later, on the 10th March, he asked whether any countries had representation there, and if so, which. His chief, Locker-Lampson (who had recently been moved from the Home to Foreign Under-Secretaryship), in reply to his honourable and gallant friend, mentioned Russia, Poland, Greece, and Afghanistan. What reasons, Eden asked, other than lack of suitable building are operative against permanent establishment of a British representative at Angora? But Locker-Lampson preferred not to make any statement 'at the present moment'.

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Locker-Lampson's transference brought Eden right into the orbit of foreign affairs. So far he had confined himself to the Near East, from henceforth he was to become a specialist in world policy. The sphere of his influence and interest widened at a critical moment in post-war diplomacy.

Locarno had brought Austen Chamberlain honour in the form of a K.G. and glory from the acclamation of Press and people. For a few weeks Great Britain, France, and Germany went on a political honeymoon, and gave evidence of a new design for European living. 'Let the dead bury their dead', Sir Austen had declared, and the world had applauded. It was a time when the symbols of good faith had intense meaning. Locarno would have to be developed and confirmed at Geneva. Everything turned on the form of that development and confirmation. After Locarno it had been generally understood that the next League Council meeting was for the sole purpose of admitting Germany to a permanent seat on the Council. But some weeks before the date of the Council meeting rumours spread that France

intended to propose Poland—a step that was calculated to undermine the unique significance of Franco-German reconciliation. On the 23rd February, in a speech at Birmingham, Sir Austen gave substance to the general alarm by allowing the impression to be conveyed that he had already arranged with M. Briand to support Poland's claim. There followed one of those spontaneous surges of public opinion in Press and Parliament and in public meetings which are an inherent, if incalculable, factor in our public life. Lord Grey added his authority and prestige to the general outcry, and in a speech at Newcastle asserted that neither the British, German, nor French Government should tie their hands by any declarations beforehand, and urged that if there was to be discussion of our admitting additional nations to the Permanent Council, that discussion should take place only after Germany had been admitted so that Germany could take part in it.

On the 1st March Sir Austen tried to allay anxiety by meeting the League of Nations' Parliamentary Committee, which consisted of members from all parties. He asked for patience and for latitude; a principle was not at stake, only a method of negotiation. We could persuade; it was not open to us to dictate. Labour members were dissatisfied, and a debate was challenged and which took place on 4th March. Once again Sir Austen was ambiguous until confronted with a straight 'yes' or 'no' question from Ramsay MacDonald as to whether any claim other than Germany's would be admitted. He replied he was not prepared to say 'no' in any circumstances whatever. He again asked for freedom of action. In spite of the allegations of Mr. MacDonald that the Foreign Secretary was pledged not merely to Poland but to Spain and Brazil as well, and the personal plea of Mr. Lloyd George, who remarked that never had he seen the public take the conduct of affairs so decisively from the Foreign Office, the Prime Minister associated the Government to the full with

Sir Austen's view. The Labour motion was lost by 224 to 124, but the figures suggested that Government supporters were not wholly satisfied.

As his critics had feared, Sir Austen's 'free hand' involved him when he got to Geneva in the most unfortunate consequences. Sweden stepped in where England feared to tread, and took the credit of resisting alone the demands of France and Italy, while Sir Austen's complacency towards these two Powers helped to defeat Germany's admission to the Council. Sir Austen returned home to a storm of criticism. All the applause that had been showered upon him but a few months before now turned to abuse. He himself was moved to describe the conference as 'a tragedy', and attempted to cover up the failure by an arrangement with France and Germany that Locarno should be kept alive even though Germany was still out of the League. Otherwise Sir Austen had nothing to say in Parliament. This silence he would no doubt have maintained had not the Opposition forced a debate on supply on the 23rd March. Mr. Lloyd George led off with a powerful philippic, although *The Times*, with unusual brusqueness, summarized it as 'discursive and disconnected'. He concentrated his charge against the Foreign Secretary by alleging that the negotiations had failed because they had been preceded by a secret arrangement to which Sir Austen was a party. In some ways Mr. Lloyd George overstated his case. In pre-war politics an element of forensic exaggeration was a virtue in debate; the influence of Baldwin and the growth of Labour, who are not too good at indignation in the grand manner, have put a new value on under-statement.

But if Mr. Lloyd George was somewhat excessive in attack, Sir Austen made the same mistake in defence. 'Mr. Chamberlain's reply,' says that neutral commentary the *Annual Register*, 'was remarkable chiefly for the bland way in which he ignored the precise matter of complaint against him. The Germans, he admitted, had been misled,

but no one was in the least to blame for misleading them. He was not sorry for what he had done: rather he claimed credit for having kept Locarno so truly intact.' He rounded his speech off in a pæan of self-praise and self-pity. 'Sir, I have done. The House knows what my mission was. They know how I sought to carry it out'—(which was the one thing they did not know, and which he had tried not to tell them). 'If it goes against me I shall neither complain nor repine. I shall wait for a moment of calmer judgment and truer historical perspective, and in my retirement I shall have sure consolation . . .' to its sugary conclusion: 'While I have been spokesman of my country in foreign relations no man with whom I have dealt in that capacity has questioned the honesty of our policy or doubted our good faith and our word.'

Even *The Times*, in a very friendly mood, was forced to call it 'an unnecessary swan-song' and to imply that until that moment he had had the sympathy of the Conservative benches. Mr. MacDonald made much of this unfortunate peroration along the lines that he did not believe in the stories about intrigue. The Foreign Secretary had simply blundered. Upon Brazil, however, whose vote against Germany and whose claim for a seat on the Permanent Council was the actual pretext at Geneva, Mr. MacDonald, like Mr. Lloyd George, was definite. 'I do not believe for a moment that Brazil standing alone, without any prompting, did what she did.' This assertion according to *The Times* was far-fetched. All the same, the atmosphere as a whole was not particularly propitious for a Conservative back-bencher to rush in and defend the Foreign Secretary: but this is precisely what Anthony Eden did. According to the *Annual Register* the way Unionist members (ignoring both their own views previously expressed and the facts of the situation) rallied to the support of the Foreign Secretary, taking him at his own valuation and showering on him compliments for saving the Locarno

Agreement and even saving the League of Nations, was the most remarkable feature of the debate which followed.

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For Eden the task was particularly difficult. He had identified himself with a policy which if it had not yet crystallized into one of League liability was yet sufficiently modern that it demanded—as in the case of Turkey—a new deal for and with the defeated Powers. He had now to defend what was in fact a reverse both for Germany and the League. He had been preceded by Lord Hugh Cecil, whose Olympian detachment he could admire but not safely emulate. He assumed a direct realistic attitude. The plea was that Great Britain should put her foot down, but the only logical consequence of such action would be to secure not simply Germany's entrance into the League but also the black-balling of any other candidate under any circumstance whatever. That was a possible course to pursue, but at the same time it was both 'arrogant and dictatorial'. We could be grateful for the attitude Sweden had adopted; but it would bode ill for the League if it provided a precedent. 'It is impossible for this country to go to Geneva with a declared and immovable edict. It is absolutely contrary to the whole purpose for which the Council of the League exists. What is the use of having a Council if everyone issues an edict before they get to it?'

He then made a skilful thrust at Mr. Lloyd George. 'The last member of this House who had any right to advocate the policy of putting your foot down was Mr. Lloyd George. He was always putting his foot down. Did that result in the friendship of France, the confidence of Germany, or in the goodwill of Turkey? To-day in the Near East it is a heritage of the right honourable gentleman's policy which is making it so difficult for us to obtain the goodwill of Turkey. He was always putting his foot down and always trying to take it up again. It is exactly what you cannot do. And as a

result he was always putting his foot into it.' He attacked Mr. MacDonald for his pessimism. 'The League seemed to be doomed, and we were living in an atmosphere of inspissated gloom.' (It is interesting to note, in parenthesis, that Eden invoked this peculiar phrase eleven years afterwards. The exploitation of such a *recherché* word as 'inspissated' symbolizes his peculiar attention to debating style.)

If Mr. MacDonald was asking too much of the League it is interesting to note what Eden hoped from it in 1926. 'For my part I never expected in its earliest years the League would be called upon to give heaven-sent judgments, to formulate impeccable decisions. That is to ask too much. What I had hoped of the League, and do hope still, is that its greatest benefit will be by the opportunities it will create for statesmen of different nationalities to meet and exchange those opinions.' He then developed what almost amounts to a League philosophy which has been the keynote of all his subsequent action and popularity. 'To expect', he declared, 'the League to change human nature in a year or two was an extravagant expectation.' He frankly admitted disappointment, which Sir Austen would have done well to admit as well. The descriptions of some of those intrigues that took place were 'not very palatable reading'. But there was a real lesson to be learned from all this apparent failure. 'You will not change by one instrument or in one day the passions of nations. It must take time. Far more harm has been done to the League by people with their heads in the clouds and their brains in their slippers than by the most inveterate enemy the League ever had.' Sir Austen had endeavoured, whatever the outcome of events at Geneva, to secure that the work he did at Locarno should not be lost. It was not lost.

And then some clever debating finesse: The Locarno Agreement survived, and no greater strain could have been put upon it than was in fact put upon it at Geneva.

Since the war we had sometimes been rejoicing prematurely at pacific efforts made by this country. 'Locarno has proved itself by the test which it has stood to be a real and true agreement arising from a desire of the nations to make that agreement real.' If for nothing else we should avoid excessive pessimism about 'this unfortunate business'. He was, then, more inclined to take comfort from the strength of Locarno than to be despondent about the weakness of Geneva. This apologia comes strangely from the man who was ten years later to exploit the machinery of Geneva in order to clear away the wreck of Locarno. The shifting course of politics makes puppets as much of the cautious advocate of the *via media* as of the mystic and the demi-god. But on the whole, credit must be given to Eden for leaving a sufficient number of doors open to ensure a consistent escape in most emergencies.

In this case, if Geneva was 'an unfortunate business', 'the results were not so entirely sordid as some imagine'. There were the efforts of Sweden and Czechoslovakia and the dignified behaviour of the German representative on the one hand, and M. Briand's tribute to it on the other. Finally, there was the satisfactory collaboration of the Dominions. The co-ordination of Imperial policy was an issue with which the House would have to deal in the near future. In the meanwhile an 'absorption in Europe' must not dull 'our Imperial sensibility'. We must not be shackled by our geographical position to become a mere 'appendage to Europe'. The ultimate value of Locarno was that those countries previously enemies should now be arbitrating by conference instead of arbitrating by the sword. This was the real 'Spirit of Locarno'. The wine was not corked up. It had only been delayed in delivery, and had not suffered in quality through the delay. On the contrary it was maturing, to become a source of strength and a stimulant not only to the brain but to the heart of man.

ANTHONY EDEN

Eden was followed by Sir John Simon; and the fact that Sir John saw fit to stress that 'the honourable and gallant gentleman opposite has, I think, put a much more reasonable point of view than the view with which the Foreign Secretary concluded', is in no small measure testimony to its adroit argument and expression. In 1926 Sir John was in opposition to the very attitude to international relations symbolized by his tenure of the Foreign Office. In 1926 Simon was the Progressive and Eden to the Right. They were both in process of transition, and for some time they come within the same orbit of sympathy and understanding. In 1926 Sir John was making his point by differentiating between the spirit and the letter of support for the League. He did not agree with the policy of putting the foot down: it was a matter of will-power and of procedure that either encouraged or discouraged success. He criticized Sir Austen for an exaggeration both of his achievement and his failure. British foreign policy was not as satisfactory as he made out, nor was Geneva a tragedy. It was a misfortune, and 'the hon. and gallant gentleman (Mr. Eden) used more moderate language when he comforts the House by saying that things are not so deplorable as they seem.' He agreed there was a tendency to dwell upon events of the recent past, but 'like the hon. and gallant gentleman I am much more interested in what is likely to be the immediate future of the League.'

Baldwin wound up this remarkable debate and attempted to cut across the Opposition's case by exploiting flippancy, of which rare and delicate art he has always been a great master. Mr. Lloyd George had clothed himself in an air of 'spiritual lachrymosity'. He felt that when that silvery voice was stilled for ever the word Geneva would be found in his heart. He alluded to his own simplicity, and was glad that the opinion he held of himself was confirmed by so good a judge as Mr. MacDonald. The dangers of negotiations in French were also stressed and Dr. Johnson cited,

who once had said that he never spoke French to a Frenchman—it was putting the rascal at too great an advantage: he always addressed him in Latin! Mr. Baldwin's attitude, says the *Annual Register*, did not well accord with the seriousness of the subject. As for policy he pointed to the Commission to examine League machinery on which Germany had been asked to serve on equal terms. The Government's present view on this subject was that unanimity on the Council was the best principle and that, equally as a principle, permanent seats on the Council should go only to the great Powers. He ended with an appeal for the Conservative Party to confirm its support for the Government which had already stood by the Foreign Secretary. The answer was a resounding vote of confidence, the motion of censure being defeated by 325 votes. With this result the criticism of Sir Austen and rumours that he would be transferred to another office died down.

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This impressive excursion by Eden into the realms of Parliamentary dialectic, and European diplomacy did not fail to make its impression, but for the next three or four critical months—which included the drama of the General Strike and the disillusion of its aftermath—he was content to keep away from the limelight and apply himself to the detailed duties of Parliamentary private secretary. Journalists whose imaginations are more lively than their information is authentic, have attributed to Eden a keen and a sharp temper which they assert he has inherited in the natural order of things from his tempestuous father. Such an assertion is easier to make than to deny, and quite apart from its truth or otherwise constitutes news value. But whatever may be his personal temper, a study of Eden's career, particularly in its early stages when one might well expect it to be amply seasoned with indignation and indiscretion, shows clearly

that in public affairs his first regard was to seek conciliation and to avoid controversy. For most public men the General Strike demanded harangues; for Eden it coincided with silence. He had nothing to say between 24th March and the beginning of June, and when the General Strike was safely over he made one or two mild observations on an amendment to the duration of a tariff proposal in the Budget. On 30th June he proposed the toast of the Central Asian Society defining the recently signed treaty with Turkey on the 'Iraq question as a 'satisfactory acceptable and creditable solution'. Lord Peel and other ornaments of British public life in the Near, Middle and Far East, made suitable replies.

At the end of July he intervened in the debate on the debt settlement with France, concluded a few days previously between Mr. Churchill and M. Caillaux. It was not in itself a particularly satisfactory bargain. French payments to Great Britain were no longer to be dependent upon German payments to France: £600,000,000 were to be wiped off within sixty-two years, but no modification of America's rigid attitude to inter-Allied debts was obtained.

Once again Eden played the rôle of peacemaker and tried to extract the formula that would give the House the widest measure of satisfaction. 'I do not think there can be any doubt', he declared, 'but that it is a step forward to have secured an agreement at all, and our real regret is that this which should have been of real benefit to France and to her credit should have come at a moment when she is undergoing another of her political crises.'¹ He asked that the subject should not be regarded wholly as a financial question. It was something far more than that. A very much wider point of view was needed. 'I do not suppose there is any member of this Committee who has travelled in France in recent years who has not frequently noticed that France's indebtedness to us was a subject of anxious

¹ The debate coincided with the downfall of the Herriot Government.

comment and conversation. Indebtedness creates friction.' The agreement should be judged for the effect it would have not only on our relations with France but also on our relations with other countries in Europe. 'It is a good maxim never if you can help it to borrow money from your allies. You had better borrow it from neutrals, or even from those who are or were your enemies.' He asked about the compensations for British subjects and firms who had contracted a loss in France as the result of enemy action in the war, and he wound up with a further plea for perspective. 'This indebtedness can only really be judged in relation to the cost of war in other directions. We in this country poured out treasure not only of money but of endeavour and of blood and limb.' He welcomed any agreement that would give strength for the future to the historic friendship of France and Great Britain.

Nothing could have been more decorous—no vain regrets, no ugly recriminations in which those two Titans, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, engaged during the later stages of the debate, but instead the charitable interpretation. The sincerity of the speech cannot be questioned—but it was also wise and clever. He could speak with inside knowledge of the trends of British foreign policy. Suspicions had gathered round the purposes of Anglo-French collaboration; any special plea calculated to purify the atmosphere was no doubt very welcome to the harassed Foreign Secretary.

Chapter VIII.



AIDE TO SIR AUSTEN

EIGHT DAYS after the debt speech there appeared the following sober announcement tucked away at the bottom of the leader page of *The Times*: 'The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has appointed Captain Anthony Eden, M.P., to be his Parliamentary Private Secretary in succession to Mr. L. R. Lumley, M.P.,¹ who has resigned on proceeding to Australia as a member of the British Parliamentary delegation.' From this moment Eden's star was in the ascendant: up to this moment the Parliamentary tipsters, although impressed by his elegant appearance and the graceful style of his speeches, had not marked him for anything bigger than an ultimate under-secretaryship. He was regarded as an ornament of post-war Toryism—and to that extent fragile. There was distinction about him rather than brilliance. The truth was that the war had killed off the heroes of his generation. The competition was not keen, the ranks were thin, the standard was low. Indeed the move has about it all that casual inevitability which is an endless source of wonder to foreign observers. With Lumley's departure Sir Austen was too busy to look for a successor, so he went to Locker-Lampson and asked his advice. Locker-Lampson was finding Eden invaluable and had no doubt that he was the best man for the job. So he decided that he must subordinate his personal requirements to the interests of Sir Austen and the State and recommend Eden. Eden's position with Locker-Lampson was, as Locker-Lampson freely admits, the lowest rung on the ladder; but it had made

¹ Lumley, who abandoned politics for the Civil Service, is now Sir L. R. Lumley and Governor of Bengal. He is a close personal friend of Eden, and acted as godfather to Eden's second son, Nicholas.

possible a steep and quick ascent: altogether the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs had been a very good friend to the young and inexperienced Member for Leamington. It is always extremely difficult for a back bencher to catch the Speaker's eye, but he is susceptible to the well-timed word from a Minister. On more than one occasion Locker-Lampson's tactful suggestion made public what would otherwise have been a well-prepared but undelivered oration from Eden.

Locker-Lampson's chief impression of Eden at this time is of his intense ambition. 'He was very ambitious, but in a good sense and as every young man ought to be.' Then again he found him an extremely keen student of foreign affairs, anxious to supplement his precocious travel experiences in every way open to him. Finally he impressed Locker-Lampson from the beginning as an accomplished Parliamentary debater. It was his attention to style in the form and substance of his speeches as well as in his appearance and manner that first opened the doors of opportunity to Anthony Eden.

Thus at the age of twenty-nine he was safely inside the privileged ring of what the newspapers call 'well-informed circles'. He was in a pivotal position to study the mechanism of a foreign secretaryship under a Conservative Government and to analyse foreign affairs through the day-to-day contact with, if not a great Foreign Secretary, at least a supreme Parliamentarian. For a man of Eden's watchful disposition it opened up a boundless future: it was just the work to bring his experience to full maturity.

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By a curious irony Eden's appointment coincided with Sir Austen Chamberlain's preoccupation over an obscure back bench member of the League of Nations, Abyssinia. Sir Austen had not fully recovered from the Geneva set-back, and was intermittently sniped at during the remainder of the

session. Eden had always stressed peace with Kemalist Turkey, but the very process of liquidating the dispute involved troublesome consequences. Before settlement was reached Great Britain had Italian backing in her claims against Turkey. A price for this support was demanded by the restless and apparently irresponsible Benito Mussolini, and was quietly paid by Sir Austen. An arrangement was made between Great Britain and Italy mutually to recognize spheres of influence in Abyssinia and in addition to grant to Italy the 'exclusive right' to certain concessions. The immediate effect of this Anglo-Italian arrangement was to arouse French misgivings, which, as the third party to the 1906 Agreement, shared Great Britain's and Italy's special interest in Abyssinia. France demanded satisfaction from the British Foreign Office, and failing to obtain more than an ambiguous reply, encouraged Abyssinia to exploit her League privileges against the Imperialist designs of the British and Italian Governments.

Questions were asked in the House, and Sir Austen was able to make the British Government yet again the exponent of all that is disinterested and laboriously honest. Anglo-Italian agreement implied no conceivable threat to the integrity of Abyssinia. 'Exclusive' rights were amply defined. No pressure would be brought on the Abyssinian Government; it would merely be asked 'at the proper time to take into friendly consideration' the proposals made. We welcomed Abyssinia's action in bringing her accusations to the League as it would give the British Government a chance to show the full innocence of its policy. These formulae no doubt fitted in with Eden's view of legitimate and honourable procedure. The whole thing was at best a debating issue—a little capital for the Opposition, a little credit for the Government.

For the remainder of the year Eden was kept hard at work. The function of a Foreign Secretary's *alter ego* in the House is to be obtainable in the Lobbies, to absorb shocks and criti-



THE WARSAW TALKS

*Left to right : Colonel Beck (Polish Foreign Minister), M. Moscicki (President of Poland), and Eden.
In the President's study, April 4th, 1935*

cisms, and generally to be discreet in debate to the point of abstinence. Eden only made two more speeches in the House during the session, both at the beginning of December—one on a constituency housing problem, and the other a somewhat inept intervention in the Labour vote of censure on the Government for their attitude to the great mining strike. Eden did not know his subject and did not speak to the motion. It rather looks as though he had been put up by the Government Whip to keep the ball rolling for them. Once again he tried to hold the balance between the disputants, but what is good enough for orthodox foreign policy will not do for what was probably the bitterest domestic dispute in the industrial history of this country. He kept to his theme that the essential defect of Socialism is that it is yellow rather than red. Never had it been so 'inept or inarticulate'—so 'supine and so silly'. 'Hon. members opposite are fond of telling us that they are the enemies of Communism, and that Communism has been as much their enemy as ours. I think probably that is true, because if ever Communism reached to power in this country the first people to suffer would be the Kerenskys sitting on the front bench opposite'—which provoked the effective interruption: 'You do not say that at election times.'

The strike, or lock-out, he defined as 'the scalping-knife of the twentieth century, abhorrent alike to reason and truth, and yet it is still used.' Can we not devise some means by which it shall not be used? Perhaps Sir Alfred Mond's suggestion was the best when he appealed for some form of arbitration and outside court of appeal by a body similar to the League of Nations. 'I care not what form it takes, but it should surely be possible for all parties in this House by their united efforts to find some formula which will assist to meet this difficulty,' otherwise there was no future for British industry. The suggestion that we would all have to make sacrifices for the common pool brought ironic applause. 'Oh yes, we shall,' he asserted,

and with perhaps more heat than wisdom went on to say that members opposite, by their suspicions, were showing how much harm the present spirit can do. 'They may not believe me, but I was thinking of our party and not theirs at that moment. I was thinking that we would have to put some sacrifice into that pool.' A real gesture of peace would have to be originated and interpreted by the House.

Eden's generalities betrayed his ignorance of industrial relations. His emphasis was always on his personal experience, because when that failed him he could not, like Stanley Baldwin, give the hazy outline a compelling authority. It is interesting to note that Baldwin—whom Eden followed so closely in the search for the formula that would bring all men of goodwill into the Conservative fold—used this particular debate for one of the most severe party polemics he has ever delivered in the House.

During the second half of 1926 international relations followed a comparatively smooth course. At the beginning of September Sir Austen was in Geneva at the meeting of the League which admitted Germany, together with Poland, to seats on the Council, while on the Continent he had conversations with French and Italian Ministers, and gave encouragement to the direct-contact diplomacy with which Eden was to be so closely identified. On 30th September he met Mussolini on board a yacht outside Genoa. The meeting, he told the Press, was in the first place of friends and in the second place of Foreign Ministers—a degree of intimacy which Eden, to his cost, was never able to obtain. They had found 'without surprise but with satisfaction' a community of outlook both on the particular issues between England and Italy and on the large issues of European politics. On the way home he had a talk with Briand to go over his talk with Mussolini, and Briand explained what he had said to Stresemann at Thoiry. The Thoiry conversations were also part of the general process of informal appeasement, and although Briand gave no explicit pledge about the evacuation of troops

from the Rhineland, the possibility of evacuation became practical politics from that meeting onwards.

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Nineteen twenty-seven opened in an atmosphere of political exhaustion and quietude. The fires of controversy in home affairs were spent; there was a comparative respite in Europe; debate accordingly gathered round events in the Far East. A Nationalist movement was making steady progress and creating sporadic disturbance, which found expression in acute anti-British feeling. On 4th January a Chinese mob stormed the British and other foreign concessions at Hankow, and British residents there and in the Yangtse valley were gathered into Shanghai for safety. The Government first of all regarded the riot as nothing more than an incident, but afterwards was forced to the conclusion that it was symptomatic of sentiment throughout China and that military precautions should be taken to ensure more adequate protection of British nationals. Forces were dispatched amid an outburst of popular applause.

In December 1926 the Government had defined its conciliatory attitude to Chinese nationalism in a memorandum. Three days after the troops had left it presented the Southern and Northern armies with a further statement declaring the measures Great Britain intended to take without revision of treaties in order to meet the aspirations of the new China. British concessions at various points were to be transferred to the Chinese. On 29th January Sir Austen Chamberlain, in a speech at Birmingham, gave assurances that the reinforcements were only to save British life and property, and that Great Britain was only waiting to give expressions to its friendly sentiments towards China in negotiation with a government which could not speak for the whole of the country. The Labour Party was highly suspicious of the Government's policy, and

felt that the combination of the mailed fist and the olive branch was calculated to provoke rather than allay the danger of a general war.

The National Council, representing the trade union movements as well as the Parliamentary Party, accordingly published a manifesto condemning the Government's action in no uncertain manner, and actually went as far as telegraphing the terms of its resolution to Mr. Chen, the Chinese Nationalist leader, and sent him a letter saying that it would do all in its power to procure a settlement that would give China national independence in the fullest sense of the words. The actual dispatch of troops divided the party: Mr. Thomas was for it, Mr. Wheatley against, while Mr. MacDonald wobbled. Labour opposition culminated, however, in a great mass meeting in the Albert Hall at the beginning of February, at which allegations were made about a war party within the Cabinet. This particular campaign is a good example of the persistent strength of Labour's international idealism and of the equally persistent weakness of their Parliamentary tactics. Having been defeated in one debate they exploited the same arguments in Committee of Supply a month later, after a settlement, which was generally approved, had been reached between Mr. Chen and the British representative in China. The initiative was thus handed over on the second occasion to the Government spokesman.

But Labour was further outflanked, for the Conservatives used the Chinese disturbances to press their case against Soviet Russia. Russia had played her part in fomenting anti-British agitation in the Far East, and the occasion was now exploited by a section of the Conservative Party to repeat their claim that Anglo-Soviet relations should be broken off. Notes were published by the two Governments which did not substantially help the situation. It was generally felt that matters could not rest as they were. Labour wanted to improve Anglo-Soviet trade: Tory diehards to bring it to

an end. In a debate opened by Sir Archibald Sinclair on 3rd March, Sir Austen tried unsuccessfully to reconcile these incompatible demands and reserved for the Government the right to take further action, but before doing so 'would call the world to witness' how serious the complaints were and give the Soviet one more chance to conform its conduct to the ordinary rules of international life and comity. Accordingly on 8th March we find Sir Austen in Geneva making capital for the Government out of the crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations, and his Parliamentary Secretary in the House scoring points on the theme of 'Troops for China and Security for Britain.

Sir Austen wished to dispel the belief that Great Britain was attempting to engineer a coalition against the Soviet Government. British policy had remained unchanged since Locarno and was summed up in one word, Peace. We never sought to promote our own interests by fomenting trouble between other countries. Eden for his part refused to accept any definition of class distinction which would deprive any citizen of the British Empire of the full rights of his citizenship. 'Citizenship has nothing to do with either class, creed, or sect'. He inveighed against the Opposition's active interference in the crisis. He was afraid that, whatever the motive for it might be, 'it proved once more that the only way by which an Opposition can assist the Government of the day in carrying out its foreign policy in a time of difficulty is to give it its loyal support within and without this House'. This view has, on the whole, been exploited by Eden's enemies with greater effect than by Eden himself, and it is a theme to which he has not often made such explicit reference. His contention was that 'while these warring generals have been at each other's throats, or rather prodding each other with a rather leisurely bayonet, we have maintained neutrality, and we are in no sense responsible for the anomaly which has been bred by these contending armies.' In these circumstances we should look to the lives of our nationals

and take the advice of our representatives on the spot about the necessary measures.

He ended with a more than usually bitter onslaught on Socialism for its militant pacifism. 'I suppose we shall see inscribed on their banners in letters of gold such cries as "Socialism is defeatism"; "Endorse Socialism and leave English women to their fate"!' Such lapses into party jargon are rare, and do not, it would seem, represent Eden's instinctive approach to controversy. Nevertheless this somewhat excessive and artificial anger had the effect of putting Labour on the defensive, making it appear at once indifferent and partisan, and although Mr. Clynes made an effort to smooth out the debate by asserting that no Opposition speaker had ever criticized the Government for their negotiations but only for their military action, his party called for a division, and were roundly defeated by 303 votes to 124.

On 23rd March Eden moved his first resolution, on the subject of Empire Settlement, and cashed-in on the experience he had gained from his visit to 'Places in the Sun'. His motion was skilfully worded and calculated to eliminate party strife. It declared: 'That this House observes that over a period of widespread depression in trade the proportion of our trade with the Empire has increased and continues to increase; and is of opinion that, in order to benefit the people of this country by developing our best and most productive markets, and in order to assist those Dominions which so desire it, further to increase the British population within their territories, no effort should be spared in co-operation with the Governments of the Dominions to initiate new proposals and to increase the existing facilities for settlement in the Empire overseas.' The speech he made to this theme was one of his best efforts. It was well informed but not overloaded with detail, critical but not cantankerous. It

must have advanced considerably his popularity and prestige in the House.

Before the resolution was called the House had had a stormy afternoon on a Scottish Bill. Eden's success can be measured by *The Times* digest of the debate. All the speakers on both sides of the House who followed him were encouraged to put forward constructive suggestions. The seconder of the resolution talked about a Minister for Settlement; Major Astor about the adoption of areas in the Dominions by British cities, and Mr. MacKinder elaborated the need for personal experience. According to *The Times* this speech, and that of Dr. Shiels, were welcome signs that 'the problem is both non-party and "understood of the people".' Mr. Hilton Young, recently turned Tory, was moved to eulogize a new Socialist vision of a peace-ensuring and -ensuing British Empire which had supplanted the old Socialist nightmare of that Empire as a capitalist dodge. Miss Bondfield took the motion seriously, stressed the need for special aid in the settlement of women, and attributed the obvious change in the Socialist attitude to the new guarantee of decent living conditions overseas. Mr. Amery (the Dominions Secretary) was able to rise in 'a congenial atmosphere' to give credit to the Empire Settlement Act in spite of 'practical difficulties in the way of the rapid expansion of the policy upon which we have been embarking', for the steady increase it had caused of interest in and knowledge of a subject of profound importance. The mover of the resolution had made 'an admirable speech' and 'to-night's debate has, to me at least, been full of encouragement'. *The Times* considered it an excellent debate. Over and above the goodwill and helpful suggestions Mr. Amery had little to offer that was new, nor did any hint emerge that Government policy would do anything to quicken the rate of immigration in the near future.

As for the mover of the resolution, *The Times* asserted that in calling attention to the reciprocal value of Empire

Captain Eden had grasped two great truths: the first, that producers wherever they may be must have a market for their produce; and the second, that settlers must know the conditions of life at their destination before immigrating. He began with his Hymn to Unity. The motion was widely drawn to enable members of all parties who had recently been in touch with this problem in the Dominions to give the House, if they so wished, the benefit of their advice and experience, and to avoid a debate of a partisan nature. The subject was 'too big for us to derogate and make of it a shuttle-cock of party warfare'. Hopes had been set too high on the possible results of legislation. Government action could only be limited. 'It is only when the trade of this country is good that the flow of immigration is satisfactory'.

Another factor affecting the flow of immigration and over which there could be some control was the percentage of failures. 'One failure perhaps may have more influence than ten successes'—if only because a failure calls for explanatory criticism and publicity, while a success is too busy promoting that success to explain it to the world. Time devoted to the causes of failure was time well spent. The two causes Eden stressed were lack of knowledge and lack of information. 'I think,' he declared, 'it would be a great advantage to the education of this country if more time could be devoted to a study of the rapid progress of New Zealand and the development of Australia, and rather less time, say, to the hunting habits of William Rufus or the passion for shell-fish of our Norman kings. Equally, I think, it would be found an advantage if we could give more time in our schools to studying the exploits of Captain Cook and rather less to the efforts made by King John to retrieve his baggage from the Wash.' Communications were on the side of understanding, but if there was now as much knowledge of conditions in Australia as there was of those in Belgium or France, the problem would largely solve itself. He asked for further reductions in travelling costs and for closer atten-

tion to the migration of the fair sex, by which he meant 'women apart from domestic servants'!

There were suspicions in the Dominions that we were advocating migration for some sinister political purpose and that the effect of inflating the labour market would be to deflate the standard of living. Though this was a reasonable fear Eden felt it was unfounded, for the somewhat airy reasons that 'no one has any other motive than to try and raise the standard of living in every part of the Empire', and that '*laissez-faire* was dead'. Then to a subtle appeal, keeping in mind his attitude to Labour in his little book, 'I do not think that anybody or any organization could work more usefully than hon. members on the benches opposite to remove this suspicion'. If they would follow up the admirable work which they did in Australia recently and the speeches they made they could do more than anybody else to remove the last lingering suspicion which may exist in the minds of the Australian Labour Party or any other similar organization. The work of the somewhat threadbare Overseas Settlement Committee should be supplemented with some body comparable to the Migration and Development Commission in Australia. He had in mind a small organization which could keep in very close touch with the respective Dominions and both supply and receive more extensive details about the people who were wishing to migrate than was at present available. Training schemes, such as the centre at Catterick under the Ministry of Labour, should be more carefully co-ordinated. There was at present a wasteful variety. The whole problem was inextricably bound up with trade. 'The two are Siamese twins, and if we try to cut them asunder neither can live. Unless we find markets in the Dominions they cannot take our population.'

Then there was the lack of information. The new-born Empire Marketing Board was producing most valuable results, although it needed generous support from the Treasury. He had a warning to give about its propaganda,

and hoped it would not copy some of the posters that occasionally confront us. 'I saw one the other day which depicted a tempestuous sea and a liner doing its utmost to weather it, and at the same time the poster exuberantly invited whoever might see it to visit one of the Dominions—apparently under similar titanic conditions! In my own case, the moment I saw the poster I thought what a brave man I had been ever to leave this island. Those who prepared the illustrated posters designed to persuade us to visit the Dominions might remember that there are some Englishmen who, like myself, only feel secure from the undulations of the ocean when they are on a 20,000-ton liner in the Suez Canal!'

It was a half-truth to say that Great Britain was overpopulated. The British Empire is under-populated, and there is a shortage rather than an excess of the British race in the world as a whole. His conclusion was prophetic: 'So the problem of migration is urgent. Though our Empire may be under-populated there are many countries that are not, and the economic and geographical pressure to-day is all in favour of expansion. If anything there is a land famine in the world to-day. Therefore the world has a right to ask us as an Empire to discharge the responsibility which we have taken upon ourselves in this vast territory which is under our control. There is no problem to-day which is more urgent, nor one which in its development will have more far-reaching effects on the future of the world, nor again one which, if properly solved, can bring our peoples greater happiness and prosperity.' On these grounds he based his apology for bringing his motion before the House.

Eden followed up his highly successful Empire Settlement speech with a long holiday from Parliamentary duties. During his absence between March and November British

foreign policy took a more decisive turn away from Geneva and in the direction of the Conservative Central Office. In the spring the rupture with Russia was successfully effected through the raid on the premises of the Soviet trade delegation at Arcos House. The brusque methods employed and the scanty evidence collected seemed to suggest that the British Government were trying to deal with the Soviet in the approved style of the O.G.P.U. In the spring President Doumergue, accompanied by M. Briand, paid a state visit. Time was found amid all the exacting ceremonial for diplomatic parley. The *communiqué* issued afterwards was significant more for the choice than the substance of its words. In describing Anglo-French relations the *Entente Cordiale* was brought out of the drawer.

While Great Britain was narrowing the range of her collaboration, she was finding difficulties in the way of an Anglo-American naval treaty in particular and of disarmament in general. The year 1927 is not an especially dramatic one in the era of lost opportunities, but it is one of the highest importance. In this year dominant conservatism begins to make a virtue of necessity; and the Labour spokesman who condemned Mr. Baldwin as the 'living embodiment of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways' was not premature. By 1927 the British Government was set upon a policy of resolute inaction. How far the Cabinet as a whole was reconciled to the new emphasis will not be known until another crop of political memoirs appears. It is probable that unity was not seriously threatened, but unanimity was to prove unobtainable, for Lord Robert Cecil was to emerge a national personality by a resignation in the grand manner.

The specific issue on which Lord Cecil's grievance was based was the deplorable breakdown of the Anglo-American naval conversations which had been staggering on throughout the summer in a welter of weariness and detail. Neither Government had in mind to make any concession sufficient to make any agreement worth while. The farce ended with

the heads of the two delegations, Mr. Bridgeman for Great Britain and Mr. Gibson for the United States, concurring in the firm opinion that the failure of the conference would not undermine the friendship of the two countries and would not inevitably lead to an arms race between them. Lord Cecil had been Mr. Bridgeman's colleague at the conference and had co-operated loyally throughout the proceedings. When they were over, however, he let the nation know without qualification just how strongly he disapproved of the Government's policy. At the beginning of August he sent in a letter of resignation from the Cabinet. Mr. Baldwin was away at the time touring Canada with the Prince of Wales on the occasion of that Dominion's sixtieth anniversary, so there was no immediate reply to Lord Cecil. As soon as Mr. Baldwin got back Lord Cecil sent in his resignation again, and insisted on its acceptance. With the letter he enclosed a minute which is one of the most outspoken indictments of the British Government's foreign policy ever composed from within the ring of responsibility. There was some hesitation before the Cabinet allowed it to be published, and then Mr. Baldwin rushed in with a reply the same evening. The repercussions from Lord Cecil's actions were felt for a long time, particularly in Geneva, but they were not sufficient to shake the Conservatives out of power.

Sir Austen had stopped on the way at Paris, and on being presented with a 'golden book' raised by public subscription, took it as a token whereby he might pledge his troth and asserted that he loved France 'as one loves a woman for her defects as well as her qualities'. No doubt this sentiment sounded less extravagant in French than in English. Its effect was unfortunate; even his attempt to qualify his passion by adding that in politics one could not be guided by the heart did not wholly meet the situation. By the time he reached Geneva his political reputation was at a low ebb. Most of the delegates were summing up Great Britain as 'the obstacle to disarmament'. Sir Austen replied with

vigour, and hammered out a number of *tu quoques*. He brusquely turned down further consideration of the Protocol. If we had not signed more arbitration treaties than other countries we had in fact arbitrated most. It was enough to guarantee the frontiers of the west; it was asking too much that we should guarantee every country and every frontier.

It is important to fit this kind of language into its context. By 1927 the world in general, and the British public in particular, were not resigned to Conservative realism. Dissatisfaction was widespread and vocal. While criticism was buzzing round his head Sir Austen took another of his autumn cruises in the Mediterranean, and this time used the occasion to visit the famous Primo de Rivera at Majorca and discussed the problem of Tangier with him. On the way back he stopped at Paris, and once more was able to assert that M. Briand and himself had 'pretty much the same ideas in their heads on all questions, not only present but those to come'.

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In the meanwhile Sir Austen's critics were not inactive and roused themselves for a vigorous campaign throughout the country. The autumn of 1927 was a decisive time in the chequered history of the League of Nations Union. This body set itself the large task of 'educating public opinion'. Although it used all the methods of a highly organized political party, it determined to cut across all party values to gather in the support of all men and women of goodwill who asked only Peace, Security, and Disarmament through the League of Nations. Chamberlain had not done enough to forestall this compelling moral plea. In 1927 the sense of insecurity was not sufficiently strong to make realism a sufficient antidote to it, but it was his misfortune that this surge of righteousness should have coincided with Lord Cecil's resignation.

The League of Nations Union campaign began with a formidable mass meeting at the Caxton Hall on 21st October at which Lord Cecil was, by natural right, the principal speaker. Professor Gilbert Murray asserted that his resignation had sent a thrill through League circles in every country. Lord Cecil (it is reported) 'stated the case for disarmament temperately and with a cogency born of conviction and knowledge of his subject'. He did not define just how far the British Empire should pledge its resources to guarantee the security of another state, but he urged that the Government should not be frightened to take risks if by doing so they made war ultimately less probable. Lloyd George, as might be expected, entered the fray as an ancestral voice prophesying war. Sir Austen replied that he could not regard Mr. Lloyd George as a true friend of peace, while Mr. Lloyd George retaliated with the view that if Europe could not advance beyond Locarno war was inevitable. The Prime Minister tried to smooth out these ripples with oil and irrelevance. The great value of the League in *his* opinion was that it promoted discussion among the representatives of European States.

Chapter IX



THE 'MARTYRDOM' OF CECIL

THERE was a brief respite, but on 16th November the storm blew up again when Lord Parmoor initiated a debate in the House of Lords on disarmament. In the course of it Lord Cecil made a remarkable speech, which has been swamped in the endless sequence of major crises during the past ten years. But of all the many personal explanations made by those who, voluntarily or otherwise, have abandoned high office, this is in many ways the most compelling. In its analysis of the function and aim of the League system, and in the vindication of his own action, his speech offered then (as it does still) a remarkable parallel and challenge to Eden's career.

'No resignation', he began, 'is an isolated act. It is usually related to a string of events of which it is the culmination. I therefore make no apology for touching briefly on what led up to mine.' He then went on to describe how the Treaty of Mutual Assistance which he had helped to draft had been rejected by our Labour Government in 1923: 'the form and substance of the rejection were a profound and bitter disappointment to me'. He had not expected such definite conservative action from such a quarter. Then came the Geneva Protocol, and once again Lord Cecil was at variance with his colleagues. The Conservatives refused to accept this effort at collective security. Cecil recognized that the Protocol had defects, but it was a genuine attempt to solve the problem of disarmament, and demanded rather amendment than rejection. The next fiasco was the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament to which Cecil was a delegate. On this occasion he came up against the Admiralty, whose 'representatives scarcely concealed their indifference,

if not their hostility, to the whole proceedings'. The British Government produced the impression that it was lukewarm in its desire that the Commission should reach a successful result.

When Cecil was asked to attend the Three-Power Naval Conference he doubted whether he could be of any use. There were too many 'fundamental differences' between his views and those of the Cabinet as a whole on the importance of disarmament. All the same he accepted, only to come up against the most fatal frustration of all. Naval parity with America was an essential part of the agreement. But Churchill, with the whole force of his personality and status, stood out against it. Lord Cecil went on to reveal his dissension with the Cabinet in terms and with details not usually associated with the reticence or etiquette of our public life. But the speech throws invaluable light on the dim struggle between progressive ideas and steady reaction in our post-war foreign policy. It is also a disquieting commentary on the facile claim that Great Britain pursued during all those lean years what is called unilateral disarmament. Eden was to be heir to this struggle, but the long drawn out persistency with which it has been waged is often overlooked.

The weary narrative boils down to this, that while Japan was ready for any scheme, the two great peace-loving democracies sacrificed naval agreement rather than reach a compromise on the gun-calibre of second class cruisers. We insisted on six-inch guns, the Americans on eight-inch. Somebody suggested a seven-inch gun, but the proposal was emphatically set aside. The experts took charge, and the Cabinet complacently submitted to the experts. 'Surely', Lord Cecil added, 'the two nations instead of meticulously counting up every ton and every gun in each other's fleet should rather have regarded themselves as equal contributors to a joint force whose chief duty was the maintenance of the peace of the world. Inside the Cabinet it seemed to me that I could do no more for the cause of disarmament. I could

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only hope that I might be able to serve it better outside.' Lord Cecil concluded these weighty arguments with a plea that the British Government should put its signature to the Optional Clause.

A week later the Labour Party followed with a lengthy vote of censure on the Government, based largely on Lord Cecil's revelations. From beginning to end his spirit brooded over the debate. Mr. MacDonald spoke of him giving 'one of the most illuminating speeches on the mind and action of this Government that I have ever read.' His action was 'absolutely unanswerable.' Sir Austen Chamberlain, in his reply, tried to share out the blame for Lord Cecil's departure; he had expressed himself as disappointed first with Mr. MacDonald and Labour and only afterwards with the Conservative Government. Mr. MacDonald asked why Sir Austen had seen fit to substitute 'war of aggression' for 'war' in an Assembly resolution. Was it to provide us with a way out of our obligations? Also, why were we not signing the Optional Clause? Sir Austen felt there was no need to define aggression. It would be clear what it was when it happened, while as for the Optional Clause he cited Lord Haldane who had pointed out that the British Empire was a very different thing from territories with unitary constitutions. 'It needed too much approval for us to be safe in asking for it,' was Sir Austen's somewhat special plea. Apart from an unparalleled interruption in the middle of Commander Kenworthy's speech when the lighting system failed and there was an adjournment for about an hour, the debate was leisurely and orthodox, which means that the Eden of 1927 speaks as the complacent back bencher who regards Lord Cecil with something like the disfavour that Mr. Neville Chamberlain regards the Eden of 1938.

Eden has travelled a long journey since that dim November speech. Lord Cecil's action did not appeal to him. The Opposition had typified the British delegation to Geneva as military in character, 'but I do not think that any of us

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would associate the First Lord of the Admiralty with the clashing of sabres or Lord Cecil with the jangling of spurs. It would have been difficult in connexion with any work to find two countenances more essentially pacific. I believe the First Lord of the Admiralty went to Geneva with all the benignity of a Father Christmas, and I believe the Noble Lord, Viscount Cecil, went there with the ecstasy of a martyr on his way to the stake. The stake in his case was quite unnecessary and entirely self-imposed, but it does not affect in any way the genuineness of his martyrdom.' If this observation is surprising to those whose memory of Eden does not go back before 1931, there are one or two more which throw significant light upon his early attitude to the general problem of British foreign policy and the League. *The Times* reported him in three lines as agreeing that the progress achieved by the Disarmament Commission had been slow but that they could not bang and hustle the world into Peace. But there was considerably more to it than that.

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The debate coincided with two considerable crises, one between Italy and Yugoslavia over Albania, and the other a boundary and minority tension between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Mr. Noel Buxton, who preceded Eden in the debate, drew attention to both these questions, and complained that Italy was sending notes to the Great Powers but not to the League. In both cases there was an opportunity to bring the disputes before the Council, in both cases they were being treated on old-fashioned diplomatic lines. The use of Article XI should be considered to effect equitable frontier control. The peaceful settlement of the Greco-Bulgarian frontier dispute of 1925—fresh in the memory, and ever since a famous League of Nations example—was cited. Eden, however, refused to admit these parallels or precedents in the Balkans, and put forward the positive if personal view that

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on the whole 'if settlements can be achieved by direct negotiations between the parties without appeal to the Council or to the League, those settlements are much better than settlements arrived at through the intervention of the League.'

It may be added, in parenthesis, that *The Times* of 25th November, which reported this debate, also announced just such a treaty as Eden was approving. It was a defensive alliance between Italy and Albania, but whether the goodwill it engendered was an effective substitute for League arbitration is another matter. 'The significance of the present alliance,' *The Times* added, 'as a ripost to the Franco-Yugoslav Treaty is obvious.' And the meaning of third-party judgment in international relations is perhaps to be seen in a quotation from the Italian paper *Impero*: 'While France and Yugoslavia are plotting secret clauses and occult codicils Italy signs a treaty of alliance with Albania in the light of day.' Eden's reaction to this atmosphere of taunt and trickery was that there is no case to make out for the intervention of the Council as a body 'under present conditions'. Nor was he prepared to give as much ground as Sir Austen had done in admitting that the British delegates had gone to Geneva without sufficient diplomatic preparation, for 'we were the invited and not the inviters, the invitation was ours either to accept or refuse, and delay would have had the obvious consequences of laying us open to a charge of lukewarmness.' Then again, if the progress of the Disarmament Commission was slow, had not Lord Cecil himself reminded us over and over again that its work must inevitably be slow? He was sure no one, least of all Mr. MacDonald, would make the mistake made by Mr. Lloyd George. 'Nobody would think that you can bang and bustle the world into peace. That has been tried before; we saw it tried. We saw the attempts to drive the world into peace by leaps and bounds, and the result was a Celtic somersault.' Mr. Garro-Jones interrupted to ask the weary question

whether Mr. Lloyd George was to blame for everything. 'Yes, for most things in the world', was Eden's reply. But it is his attack on the Geneva Protocol which is perhaps the most interesting part of this flight into robust reaction. Mr. MacDonald seemed to lament its 'lingering death'. Yet how was it that honourable members opposite had such deep sympathy with and love for it? 'Inevitably and essentially the Protocol means for us an extension of our commitments and greater responsibilities.—(Hon. members: "No!")—The Protocol means', he went on, 'that we have to undertake increased obligations if we are to join in applying sanctions to any recalcitrant member of the League. A most serious obligation must essentially fall upon us because of our geographical position and because, owing to the British Navy, we are the most mobile nation in all the community of nations.' Accordingly the responsibility of intervention upon any nation called upon to fulfil it would fall in the first instance most severely upon this country and upon the British Navy. In these conditions it could not be seriously suggested that it would not involve us in new and far-reaching commitments. It had been said, and he felt the comparison was very apt, that the difference between the obligations which Great Britain incurs as 'an ordinary member of society, a nation among nations, and the obligations under the Protocol, was the difference between a citizen in ordinary life going about his daily work and a citizen who becomes a special constable. 'If that is a true parallel I would ask, Is there anyone who wishes this country to act as a special constable, say, in a dispute between Japan and China, or between Poland and Russia?' The logic of Eden's analogy is defective and its implications double-edged, which may explain why those who have subsequently championed limited liability with greater vigour than Eden have not invoked it. Mr. Montague at once detected a flaw. 'Does the hon. and gallant member', he asked, 'suggest that this country would have no commitments and no obligations in the event of war in

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the ordinary course of things?' No, he did not suggest anything of the kind, but if Mr. Montague as an ordinary citizen saw a burglar his obligations would not be so serious as they would be if he were a special constable. To which Mr. Montague replied that we were all special constables in war-time, and that we were not in war at present. Another member asked whether it was not a condition that, before the Protocol could be brought into operation, there would have to be a policy of radical and general disarmament. But Eden would not be deflected. He was aware of the safeguards—he was also aware of the ambiguities of the Opposition, no member of which had yet asserted whether he was prepared to support the Protocol or not. All we get are vague suggestions. We must not overlook the dangers. We might, for instance, be saddled with exacting responsibilities the outcome not of unanimity but of a mere two-thirds majority. 'The powers which this House enjoys would be in a great measure surrendered. We would be bound beforehand to definite action in certain eventualities. That is a course which I do not think this House or the country will take.'

Then it was pointed out that the smaller nations were keen supporters of the Protocol. 'I can readily believe that if I was a member of a smaller nation I should be a supporter of the Protocol, because the smaller nations get all the advantages and this country has to bear the greater share of the burdens.' It was not a matter of what was best from the point of view of the smaller nations alone, but of what is best from the point of view of the greatest of nations—the British Empire as a whole. The Protocol in itself increased our commitments and decreased our power to discharge them. Yet the Opposition, while clamouring for the Protocol also demanded a decrease in our armaments. 'The only conclusion we can come to is that hon. members hope that by giving a large number of pledges they will never be called upon to fulfil any one of them.' He could not imagine anything more dangerous than the vague hope that pledges by

their very multitude will prevent anyone ever calling upon you to carry them out. Indeed, vague pledges given here and there were bad and more likely to cause confusion, which in itself causes war. 'I think we should refuse to bind ourselves and tie our hands in directions where we cannot see what the future may hold for us.'

What was the alternative? 'For my part, I consider that in the Locarno Agreement we have gone as far as we are entitled to go. The Empire, which we must never overlook on this question, would not be prepared to pledge its future more extensively.' If there is to be further progress towards international action it 'will have to be by regional pacts, local Locarnos, made by the nations of the districts whose interests are most closely connected'. The way to further European peace was by 'a number of small Locarnos'. It was pointless to say that we must have disarmament without telling us how we were to have security. An agreement to disarm was not enough. The task was to remove suspicions so that confidence may grow and arms diminish. The policy of 1925 in the long run would prove better and wiser than the policy of 1924.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this speech is its phraseology. There are no signs in it of a sense that to increase the range of League commitments and League action might in fact be a British interest. Eden falls back on pre-war language to cover what by implication he recognizes to be post-war conditions. One is left with the impression that the sentiments are skin-deep. They reflect the influence of Chamberlain's immediate presence rather than an absolute belief in his emphasis. The outside observer sees foreign affairs in black and white; to those whose day-to-day business it has been during the past decade there have been various shades of interpretation to match particular instances. It is unlikely that Eden at this time saw in this speech any contradiction with his world outlook in *Places in the Sun*. On the other hand we have to recognize that, whatever develop-

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ments Eden's attitude to foreign affairs have undergone, its origins are Right Wing. The martyrdom of Cecil was not for him. Yet it was this very martyrdom that must have forced development.

When Chamberlain took office he made it known at once that he did not relish the Genevan method of direct negotiation between foreign ministers, and delegated to Cecil what would normally have been his own functions there. With Cecil's departure there was no substitute of sufficient calibre (in Chamberlain's estimation) to take his place; Chamberlain, and those associated with him, were compelled to carry on where he left off, and to work the new machine with their own hands.

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Nineteen twenty-seven ended with the unanimous rejection of Soviet Russia's proposal for complete and universal disarmament. Mr. Baldwin would not give leave for it to be discussed in the House, while Lord Cecil described it as impracticable. On 5th December, Litvinov had an hour's conference with Sir Austen. There was a frank exchange of view, but nothing could be done to break the Anglo-Russian deadlock. Litvinov could give no pledge to confine the activities of the Third International.

Nineteen twenty-eight opened in a similar atmosphere of niggardly and lethargic policy. There seemed to be only persistent caution before unknown dangers. Foreign affairs were obliterated by floods in Chelsea and scandals in Hyde Park. Eden's interventions in debate at this time were perfunctory. He spoke once in February, using the occasion of the debate on the Address for a ramble that took him from the manufacturers of electrical machinery, *via* income-tax, to the dispatch of troops for the Far East. At the end of the month he returned for about ten minutes to his favourite topic of Empire settlement and reproduced most of the arguments for which he was beginning to establish a reputa-

tion. Once again he pleaded against haphazard immigration: rational and co-ordinated training was an essential preliminary. But even then there were limitations to the efficacy of State action. 'Economic influences outside our control dominate migration. We cannot turn it on as a tap, though we can turn it off, but what we can do is to ensure that the stream when it is running flows into the correct channel.'

In the middle of March he returned to the Imperial theme and developed it in rather more detail. The occasion was a debate on Empire trade, and Eden seconded a motion to the effect that 'this House is of opinion that the pursuit of a vigorous policy furthering Imperial trade and developing Imperial resources is desirable in the interests of this country and of the Empire.' The context of this debate should be kept in mind. Something like prosperity and boom was the order of the day; the further outlook was fair conditions prevailing. But over and above that, the historic fiscal policy of Free Trade was the accepted system. In 1928 it was the Protectionist who had to state his case to a nation that thought otherwise. With the result of the 1923 election comparatively fresh in the Tory memory the motto was still: 'By indirections make directions out'. Mr. Barclay Harvey, who moved the resolution, was astute and well-informed. The sub-division of the Continent after the war had multiplied modern national feeling. Several small nations were trying to develop their own trade by hot-house methods. Tariff barriers were mounting. These nations were no longer 'the easy field they had been for British trade in the past. In 1913 Europe took forty-three per cent of its imports from this country, by 1927 it had dropped to thirty per cent; and since 1923 the decline had been steady and persistent. On the other hand the British Empire took five per cent more of our exports in 1927 than just before the war.' He was careful to say that he was not trying to make any antithesis between our Foreign and our Empire trade and to omit that he was avoiding fair statistical comparisons. Bigger British produc-

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tion meant lower prices, lower prices meant a re-entry into foreign markets. He begged that the loophole to prosperity should be widened and that British manufacturers should study their markets in particular and opportunities in general.

'Captain Eden', says *The Times*, 'was equally restrained in his demands for State action, adding only a plea for the extension of fiscal preference to tinned fruits and the development of voluntary preference through the marketing and research work of the Empire Marketing Board.' His statistics were better, he compared exports with equivalent imports. 'In discussing these figures I may be told that I am pushing at an open door'—which, in his attempt to avoid controversy, was roughly what he was doing. But in addition to appreciating the present we had to visualize the future. The possibilities of Empire trade could only be discovered by the recognition of immediate responsibilities towards it. Only once did he lapse into the endless controversy. The Empire Marketing Board he saw as the most effectual answer which we can make to the preferential tariffs which the Dominions gave to us. 'The fiscal tradition of this country—an antiquated tradition, perhaps, some of us may think—makes it impossible to give the tariff assistance that some of us would wish, but the reply of the Empire Marketing Board we hope will be of real service to the Dominions and to ourselves.'

In 1928 Eden saw American trade as a danger rather than as an opportunity. 'Unless I am very much mistaken the capacity of the United States to absorb the products produced within their borders has just about reached saturation point.' It was not open to us to fortify solely by our action the Dominion market against this potential onslaught, but the Colonies were ours to protect. Accordingly 'a cardinal factor in the Conservative creed' must be to do all that lies in our power to develop our Colonial resources. Some of his pleas for Imperial kiss-in-the-ring were more haphazard. A par-

ticular local manufacturer in this country might find a tariff wall raised against him in a Dominion. But according to Eden the establishment of that particular industry in the Dominion would axiomatically call for a greater flow of population from this country, with the result that, although a particular market might be lost to us, it would be more than accounted for by the reinforcement in population to the Dominions' consuming market. So a Dominion tariff was nothing other than 'a national aspiration which we there see at work.' Eden ended by trusting that the House as a whole would see its way unanimously to approve the motion. It did, after a number of members on the Treasury and Opposition benches had suitably congratulated the proposer and seconder.

The cumulative effect of speeches of this nature was undoubtedly helping to give Eden a certain prestige in high places. The occasions he picked out for his prepared orations, the sentiments he reiterated, were calculated to appeal to elderly Imperialists. Later on it was this particular brand of Conservative mentality that he was mortally to offend. For the present he was climbing upon the broad backs of the Diehards.

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At the end of the month came the second reading of Baldwin's famous 'Flapper-Vote' Bill. The debate provided members with a major opportunity to indulge in a rich variety of sentiment, with Sir Charles Oman as Cassandra and Lady Astor as Rosalind. Eden was one of those who tried to invoke the comic muse. Oman (member for Oxford), one of the gallant band of seven Noes, had just preceded him, and Eden actually had the temerity to 'console myself that the University to which I belong and which I love has always been renowned as the home of lost causes.' He rebuked Mr. Harmsworth, another misogynist, 'because it came into my mind that, in his case as in my own, had he

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been of the other sex he would only very recently have been emancipated politically out of the zone of Flapperdom.' The only test he was prepared to apply to the Bill to give young women the vote was whether this newly enfranchised section of the community would in fact supply its quota of those interested in the government of the country. No one could pretend it would not. 'The trouble is,' he added, in what was for him at this time a somewhat unusual excursion into political theory, 'that we are sometimes misled by the word "democracy". We have not got democratic government in this country to-day. We never had it, and I venture to suggest to hon. members opposite that we shall never have it. What we have done in all the progress of reform and evolution of politics is to broaden the basis of our oligarchy.'

Logic was for the Bill, and there being no reason against it terminological inexactitudes were invented like the word 'flapper', which was to Eden 'a very clever piece of journalese, but rather of the penny variety'. It was not enough to-day that there was no agitation for the Bill, for very rarely in this country has there been agitation for the extension of the franchise. The two great exceptions were the Reform Bill and the Suffragettes, though he felt it would be true to assert that the latter did not represent the feeling of the great majority of the women of this country. But otherwise—and Eden was making a very sound historical distinction here—'political agitation in this country, frequent as it has been, has not been for more popular government but for better government.' As we go back the British instinct has been not for more popular government 'but to arouse the existing executive to some action or to the redress of some grievance. Neither Gladstone's nor Beaconsfield's reforms were the outcome of violent popular or political agitation. For his part the existence or non-existence of such a demand was immaterial. The question of the state of parties did not arise; he would be sorry for the future of his party if it did. On the other hand, Eden declared, 'I believe that if this

party in the future is to have a place in the future of this country it cannot afford to neglect and it ought not to neglect the rising generation to whatever sex they belong.' Any other assumption and we might as well put up the shutters straight away. He did not think there would be any revolutionary consequences. 'It is nonsense to pretend that women in these days are going to vote as women for a women's party.'

And then again another example of his shrewd historical sense: 'The House may have noticed that, curiously enough, those who have been revolutionaries in history have never been anxious for the enfranchisement of women. Both the thinkers and actors on the stage of the French Revolution were all, with a single exception, hostile to any activity by women in politics.' Revolutionaries did not favour any activity by women in politics; and he quoted Lecky's reason, which was that women are by instinct conservative—'I spell it, of course, with a small "c"—but certainly they are not revolutionary, or at least their enfranchisement has not received the support of those who were.' He ended with two surprisingly edifying stories about the widow of Condorcet and the mother of Heliogabalus, and added that in New Zealand, although they had had universal franchise since 1893 (longer than anywhere else in the world), no woman had yet been elected a member of Parliament for that Dominion.

Interesting as these speeches are as showing Eden in the guise of the Parliamentary virtuoso, they can only have represented a small part of his political activity at this time. His work with Sir Austen was concerned with international problems of a steadily increasing complexity.

Chapter X



DEBTS AND SETTLEMENTS

NINETEEN TWENTY-SEVEN was primarily a year of drift in British foreign affairs. If in 1928 the process was not arrested at least it was concealed beneath a number of lavish formulæ. In January, for instance, the British Government was confronted with a questionnaire from M. Benes, the Czech Foreign Minister and chairman of a newly formed Security Committee of the League. It was principally concerned with the problems of arbitration and security and of their relation to the League Covenant. The British reply had nothing new to say, but re-stated its policy right along the line with rather more detail, precision, and promptitude than is sometimes associated with the Foreign Office. As far as arbitration was concerned we felt that the time was hardly ripe for any general system of sanctions for the enforcement of arbitration treaties. At the same time our objections to the Optional Clause remained. Obligations could not be constant or uniform, and the undertakings a State might assume for one country might equally have to be denied to another. Locarno was still 'the ideal type of security agreement', as it was based on recognizable national interest common to all the signatories. As for Articles X and XVI of the Covenant, the Government subscribed to the interpretation that the Council could only evolve collective action against an aggressor which took account of the geographical situation and the special conditions of each state. Article XI was a 'valuable guide rather than a precise definition of obligations'. The Government was prepared to define with the best but only on the understanding that a definition was, as Sir Austen had said of it in a speech the previous November, 'a trap for the innocent and a sign-post for the guilty'. The

British memorandum only helped to swell the volume of public discontent. The criticisms from the League of Nations Union were heard throughout the land.

Shortly afterwards the Government was firm over Egypt, and Sir Austen tried to rally support for his little experiment in militant diplomacy. But early in April he was called upon to make a far more comprehensive gesture, for the British Government received from the United States Foreign Minister (Mr. Kellogg) official notification of his famous proposals to outlaw war. They had already been laid before France. Sir Austen's first reaction was one of ill-disguised embarrassment. A peace proposal emanating from any source deserved sympathetic consideration, and it was doubly a welcome if it came from the United States; on the other hand he must stress that Franco-British friendship was an essential element in world peace, and as he told a German statesman at Locarno, he did not propose to sacrifice an old friendship in order to gain a new one. This reservation shows how from the beginning the British Government and the Foreign Secretary misread the motives of those who were sponsoring the Kellogg Pact. It was either acceptable or unacceptable: it did not mean a reorientation of alliance, or even a shifting of national sympathy. It was an attempt to pay tribute to the conception of peace as a world objective and war as a world responsibility. The British Government, however, could not see its way to accept the terms of the Pact without time or qualification. The Dominions must be consulted, in case it ran counter to any engagement we had undertaken with them. Finally we declared our willingness to co-operate on the understanding that there was no essential difference in the French and American attitudes to the Pact, and that our freedom of action in respect of certain areas of the British Empire, commonly called 'outlying districts', should in no way be called to account.

'The welfare and integrity' of these areas constituted 'a special and vital interest.' In the light of British and French

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suggestions Mr. Kellogg put forward fresh proposals at the end of June. Once again the Government was wantonly circumspect, but by 18th July it plucked up enough courage to hand in a reply. The Americans had ignored the British request about the outlying districts; it was accordingly underlined. At the end of July the British reply was debated on the Foreign Office vote. Sir Austen hit out. If he was enunciating a British Monroe doctrine it was exactly comparable to America's original version, and was a measure of self-defence necessitated by the geographical position of the Empire. The Treaty might mean everything or nothing. These consequences depended almost entirely on America. Great Britain had signed in the hope and expectation that the American nation would range itself behind the Treaty.

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In the course of his speech Sir Austen casually observed that France and England had settled their differences over naval tonnage. This was interesting in itself, and general curiosity was aroused, but immediately afterwards Sir Austen was taken seriously ill with an attack of bronchial pneumonia and ordered to rest for at least two months. Lord Cushendun took his place. Nothing more was heard about the Anglo-French settlement until the middle of August, when the French blurted out a sensational story that the two countries had formed a new *entente* and were arranging to pool their navies in an emergency. Britain for her part would withdraw any opposition she had put up to the proposal that France's trained reserves should be omitted from her land forces for disarmament purposes. Indignation was immediate and widespread. It was in this atmosphere of suspicion that the British delegation set out on its annual pilgrimage to Geneva at the end of August. Lord Cushendun was at its head, and Locker-Lampson acted as substitute for Hilton Young on health questions. As Eden, in view of Sir Austen's illness, found himself without any special duties

he asked his former chief whether he could join up with him. To this the Under-Secretary readily agreed, and Eden had his first official experience of League procedure. Among the other rising hopes of Conservatism also at Geneva was Alfred Duff-Cooper, who, as one of the junior members of the British delegation and Financial Secretary to the War Office, was at this stage rather higher up the ladder of status than Eden. Duff-Cooper too brought his wife with him, and her glamorous presence at the Beau Rivage created a suitable sensation. Locker-Lampson was concerned with the finance of the League's health services, a branch of its work which, because it is not politically controversial, is usually dismissed as being either technical or subsidiary. Eden must have had ample opportunity to study the League in action and to collect overwhelming evidence of the range of its functions and interests. Those who work in any detail under the aegis of the League soon begin to dismiss from their minds concepts of it as an ideal tucked away on the horizon of the future. The demands of an international society which is growing up on all sides—inexorable but unobserved—involve at Geneva at least all the machinery of routine organization. A man as sensitive as Eden has always proved himself to be to the drift of political events must have quickly summed up the potentialities of the League System. Just what alternative methods meant, Lord Cushendun was to demonstrate and Eden to witness at close range.

Cushendun used his speech to the Assembly as a reply to false rumours in the French Press. The Agreement with France was simply to help on the work of the Preparatory Commission for a disarmament conference. There had been differences between Great Britain and France, and it was deemed advisable that these should be cleared away first. Ministers and experts had thus been engaged in conversations for some months, and the result was a single text, but it had nothing to do with policy which had never been raised. The text had been submitted to the American, Japanese, and



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Eden and Laval at Geneva, October, 1935

Italian Governments for their views, which explained the delay in publication. The French Press, however, maintained its previous attitude to the facts. Almost at once the German delegate, Herr Muller (who was also Chancellor of the Reich) put the issue to the test by raising the question of the Rhineland evacuation. He asked M. Briand whether negotiations could not be opened. Briand's reply was that Germany would have to make an offer. Lord Cushendun was approached and associated himself fully with Briand. In doing so he gave the lie to the sincerity of our laborious efforts over years to mediate between Paris and Berlin. In other proceedings of the Council, too, on Hungarian and Balkan affairs, the impression was deepened that France and Great Britain were working according to secret plan. Cushendun once again protested our innocence in a speech to the Assembly, and the American and French Press again countered with revelations which showed the whole design as an Anglo-French threat to American naval ratios. America replied at the end of September to the Anglo-French plan, rejecting it politely but firmly.

The Opposition fires were fanned by the symptoms of a new orientation in our policy. The Labour Party saw in it a repetition of the history of 1906-1914. MacDonald called it diplomacy that was neither secret nor open but 'tail out of the bag' diplomacy. Finally on 2nd October the Government published a White Paper which gave the details of the Anglo-French negotiations. This was followed up by a mass meeting at the Albert Hall to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the League of Nations Union—one of the most spectacular demonstrations ever held by a non-party organization in this country. Lord Grey presided, and Mr. Baldwin was the chief speaker. The Prime Minister used this great occasion to underline 'No change!' The position of impartiality and conciliation adopted at Locarno would be maintained, and England had no idea of building battle-ships against America. Lord Cushendun, however, the day

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before in an effort to clear the atmosphere succeeded only in involving himself and the Government even more, because, to use his own phrase, there could be 'no new *entente* with France as the old one had never been dissolved.' Cushendun was not cut out for the finesse of League arbitration, and apart from his handling of the vexed question of German Reparations at the Assembly, was both tactless and ineffectual. Eden's first official view of Geneva must have been a chastening experience.

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During the winter months Government and Opposition in both Houses kept up an intermittent attack. Cushendun did his best to bury the Naval Pact with military honours, but both the Labour and Liberal Parties were resolved to have an exhumation. The House had not resumed after its vacation for more than a week before Mr. Lloyd George had moved an Amendment to the Address. Lloyd George brought up his heavy guns. The compromise, which he obstinately called 'the Pact', was the outcome of the fatuous proceedings of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament. He quoted *The Times'* account of the delegates discussing the technical details of universal disarmament: 'Some are reading newspapers, some are writing, some are listening to the thirty-fifth delegate. Others seem to be asleep. . . . In this depressing atmosphere the Anglo-French compromise gradually arose.' Lloyd George worked himself up into a fine fury. The Prime Minister stood by Locarno, but 'the Pact' was a complete reversal. He talked about it as 'the keystone of the arch. The keystone has gone. It is an archless rainbow, Locarno.' France had not fulfilled her part of the bargain, which was arbitration in return for security. We were conniving at her breach of faith. Germany had kept her word about disarmament but France had refused to evacuate the Rhineland, and now there was this latest arrangement and Germany not consulted. 'The Pact'

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had obviously produced a deplorable effect on American opinion. Good understanding with the United States was the most important issue of all; any man who advised this country to pursue a policy based on the assumption that such a conflict was even possible ought to be treated as a dangerous lunatic. The *entente* had become an entanglement. Our impartiality and freedom of action must once again be proclaimed to the world. When Germany asked for a fulfilment of the Treaty of Versailles would Caesar send a lie?

Caesar, in the person of Mr. Baldwin, offered bland assurances. A draft agreement was not a pact. It was now scrapped, and disarmament must begin all over again. Anglo-French understanding was essential but it must not be exclusive. Mr. Lloyd George himself had foundered when it was once temporarily interrupted. We wanted the evacuation of the Rhineland, but it was useless to walk out alone. He avoided the various questions Lloyd George had asked by attacking him for his newspaper articles, from which he extracted key quotations. They were calculated to offend France and bring Britain into discredit. He admitted the misunderstandings between Europe and America. Personal acquaintance was needed, and better results would follow if discussions were substituted for dispatches. Although MacDonald could claim that Baldwin had once more avoided the main points at issue it was obvious that he had once more taken the sting out of the attack. All MacDonald could do was to repeat Lloyd George's questions: Were we committed to France?—Was it only a try on or was it something more?—What did our signature to the Kellogg Pact incur?—How were we going to carry it out? Bad psychology was at the root of our dilemma. Do not let us babble so much about security. The sinister feature of the Government's diplomacy was that fundamentally it was a war diplomacy. We must take the risks of being at peace rather than accept the risks of being half-cock at war.

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To follow three such orators, each at the top of his debating form, is a privilege that many members would prefer to waive. Nor do back benchers always wait to hear the efforts of their brethren. When a big speaker is up the House will fill with an almost magic rapidity and silence, but when he is down it empties again, and the process, equally rapid, is also ribald and brutal. Parliamentary etiquette and patience have over years become highly technical, almost inhuman virtues. In this context it is possible to appreciate the comment of *The Times* after its account of MacDonald's speech. 'The subsequent debate', it notes, 'was not dull owing to an excellent speech from Captain Eden, but it was sparsely attended until the final stages.' Very wisely he avoided the rhetorical flourish and confined himself to straightforward argument. Mr. MacDonald had 'worked himself up to some measure of indignation' at the Government's present policy, and refreshed that indignation with reminiscences of his own recent brief tour to some of the capitals of Europe. On his arrival home, Eden gathered that MacDonald was depressed and dissatisfied with the part this country was playing in the councils of Europe and the world. We were not pulling our weight. But now he was talking about the 'tremendous damage' caused by the Government in foreign affairs. 'Tremendous damage,' said Eden, 'is seldom effected by countries which do not count, which are not important to the immediate history of Europe.' The controversy was complicated, but the Government had some right to complain of the nebulous charges brought against them in connexion with the recent Anglo-French negotiations. Let us be quite clear what happened. The British Government was not responsible, according to Eden, for the original proposal, nor was it an action arising out of the brain of our Foreign Secretary with a sinister purpose behind it. The author of it was the chairman of the Draft Commission, who more than once appealed that those Powers which disagreed about the proposed Draft Convention

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should attempt to find a formula outside the confines of the Commission itself.

MR. MACDONALD: 'Can the honourable and gallant member refer me to any suggestions that were made that France and England should alone come to this agreement—should alone undertake these discussions and come to this agreement?'

CAPTAIN EDEN: 'I think it is so. The original Draft Convention was submitted by England alone, and the other Draft Convention was submitted in opposition by France alone. If, therefore, agreement was to be the outcome not within the confines of the Commission, it could only be between England and France, the only two countries who had submitted Draft Conventions.'

MacDonald tried to corner this excessively well-informed young Tory by asking him whether any attempt was made at Geneva to come to an agreement with America in the same way. But Eden was not to be led astray. Having established his point of fact there came the question: Were we right in trying to find a measure of agreement with the French Government? Undoubtedly we were. 'We therefore reach this point that it was right to try and reach agreement but that the terms we achieved were unsatisfactory.' Admittedly we did not get all we asked for. There was, for instance, no agreement on the original proposals put forward by this country which divided armaments into nine categories and limited each. 'That was the policy we desired, the right honourable member for Carnarvon Boroughs [Mr. Lloyd George] never seems to have heard of it.' But it was not a question of comparing what we wanted with what we got, but whether the limitation embodied in the Agreement was an improvement on the conditions of affairs which existed before. That was the only true comparison, and in it America was offered 'a measure of departure' from the terms she had originally rejected. Thus the Agreement was something which might reasonably form the basis of future discussion.

Having established his complete command of the details involved, Eden went on to consider the more general aspects of our policy. As for our relations with France he hoped the criticisms echoed by Lloyd George would not gain force or authority in this country. The solidarity of Anglo-French relations must form an inevitable basis for the peace of Europe, not only to-day but in the future. Recent events proved that the friendship was not exclusive. On the contrary, he went on in a remarkable passage, 'it is the medium through which alone such progress as has been made in international relations has been achieved. Through that medium the agreements of Locarno were achieved and *rapprochement* with Germany made possible. It was through that friendship that Germany was able to find a place in the Council of the League of Nations itself, but for the friendly relations which existed between this country and France the League of Nations would not now be in the strong position it is at the moment.'

How far that declaration bears the scrutiny of 1938 is another matter. To-day it is quite often enough for those Right-wingers who were in most ardent agreement with Eden's Francophil sentiments to condemn the League of Nations out of hand as an Anglo-French alliance. Eden, however, made it clear from the beginning that his conviction was not simply that Anglo-French friendship should be maintained but also that it should be extended to others. Any doctrine that Anglo-French collaboration must, in some ambiguous way, embitter other governments was 'morbid and monstrous'. He found, that on every occasion since the War when Anglo-French understanding was blurred, the prospect of peace for Europe was least happy—a somewhat sweeping discovery, and the only instance he could give was Chanak, when 'the prestige of this country sank to its lowest ebb'. According to Eden, it was entirely Lloyd George's fault. 'We are a little more charitable than he on occasions. It takes two to make a

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quarrel, but two also to make a compromise.' Eden saw in Lloyd George's difficulty with his French colleague a matter of temperament. 'The French are essentially masculine, and perhaps a little prickly to handle intellectually; the Welsh are perhaps a little more gentle, a little more feminine. A Frenchman will always wish to proceed by logic, a Welshman by instinct.' It was not, therefore, surprising to see both setting out for the same objective and ending up in opposite places. Both having arrived, and both being endowed with equal volubility, it was no more surprising to find prolonged conferences in various parts of Europe to settle which was right.

In one important particular Eden allowed himself the liberty of criticizing the Government by implication. 'I am convinced', he declared, 'that a greater measure of understanding between this country and the United States is the most important objective that the Government of this country could set before us.' The Government should not allow itself to be stopped in that work by any obstacle, however formidable or irritating. Irritation, he suggested, was perhaps the greatest difficulty to overcome. He might have added that in the previous August Mr. Kellogg, when he came to Europe to sign the Peace Pact, carefully avoided London, and that Sir Austen Chamberlain, when in the United States two months later, took similar pains to keep away from Washington. America and Great Britain stood to lose most by a rift in international peace. As the two 'world nations' we were the most interested in naval disarmament. There are still perhaps unexplored avenues which might lead us to hope for better results than have been achieved in the past. He hoped that successive governments, whatever their political creed, would assiduously pursue good relations with America, because it is 'the most formidable safeguard for world peace in the years that are to come.' Baldwin, with the debt settlement as a symbol of his original sin, was never very successful with the States. Eden, on the

other hand, was always underlining the necessity of filling in the details of Anglo-American appeasement, and steadily building up the reputation that was to make him, in terms of American opinion, perhaps the most popular of all our Foreign Secretaries.

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Eden had made the most of a limited opportunity. With the exception of his shrewd blows at Lloyd George his tone was conciliatory, and as for Lloyd George there were no doubt advantages in seeking a vendetta with him. Certainly it was an easier task to attack than to defend Chamberlain. For Eden's chief heralded his return to health and duty with a very unfortunate speech. At the beginning of December he was about to attend the League Council, but before doing so was pressed by Labour to state his views on the Rhineland evacuation. He replied that Germany in law could not press for evacuation, not having fulfilled the stipulations of Versailles on reparations; but practical politics, he hoped, would not stand in the way of withdrawal. There was general alarm that Chamberlain had seen fit to link up reparations with the evacuation from the Rhine, as but a few days previously Churchill had stated that they were distinct questions. L.G. thundered against the Government, pouring out a wealth of resonant rhetoric against our subservience to France. At Manchester he cried that 'the nations of the world are heading straight for war, not because anyone wants it, but because no one has the courage to stop the runaway horses in the chariots of war.'

This violence moved Eden to send his first letter to *The Times*. 'Mr. Lloyd George', he wrote, 'enjoys extravagance. He subsists upon superlatives. At the moment he is actuated by an animus against the French. The Government of his own country offends but only incidentally by being on friendly terms with the Government of France.' L.G.

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had asserted that we had not been so tied to France since the days of Charles II and the secret Treaty of Dover. Is that quite true, Eden asked; what about 1914-1918? Were we not tied then by every bond that should sanctify friendship? Supposing Mr. Lloyd George's charge is true that France alone offends in the maintenance of her reserves and the number of her armaments, what is the remedy? 'To seek, by conversation, to find a basis for discussion which in its turn might further international disarmament; or to hector a former ally with homilies nicely calculated to offend at the hustings each week-end? To make use of the instrument of friendship or to destroy it? Where the British Government would proceed by negotiation Mr. Lloyd George would proceed by invective. It was ever his method. It witnessed the nadir of British influence upon the continent of Europe during the closing months of the Coalition. We cannot revert to such methods without once again enduring the humiliation of their consequences'—and so to L.G.'s equine epithets, quoted above. Eden took up the metaphor with relish. 'Upon the foremost of these phantom chariots of his own imaginings rides an ex-Prime Minister of Great Britain. He leans forward—to lash the leaders with the thongs of mischief, and to cast squibs of suspicion under their hooves.'

During the remaining six months of the Government's life there was little for Eden to do but watch events. So 1929 opened in an atmosphere of political gloom and economic foreboding, and the activities of members of Parliament were for the most part confined to manœuvring for a favourable position at the forthcoming general election. A number of by-elections cast their shadows before them, and suggested that the position of the Government was far from secure. Unemployment statistics had mounted to the perturbing figure of a million and a half. 'The achievements of the Government', writes Mr. Spender, 'though solid, did not capture the public imagination. Mr. Baldwin's slogan

'Safety First' seemed uninspiring to large numbers who looked for a bold lead in difficult times.' For a while it appeared uncertain on what grounds the election would be fought.

There was a respite from the usual alarums and excursions of foreign affairs during the first half of 1929, and while members and candidates used the Easter vacation to open the flood-gates of Party oratory, Sir Austen Chamberlain was taking a holiday in Italy and availing himself of the chance to renew his friendship with Signor Mussolini by personal contact. Their conversations were private, although they were believed to have centred round the possible improvement of Franco-Italian relations. But in 1929 the Opposition parties could not work up a case against the Government because of a Chamberlain's predilection for the Duce. The Duce, it should be noted, reciprocated the goodwill, and the influence of Lady Chamberlain in Rome is the outcome of no new fledged friendship.

In spite, then, of Eden's special knowledge and ability in the field of foreign affairs, they were not an issue which was to the fore in the general election of May 1929, nor were they set sufficiently fair for the Conservatives safely to emphasize them. The catastrophic decline in Anglo-American relations was an affront to our good sense. Our relationship with France, however strongly Eden might argue in Parliament, to the electorate as a whole was too intimate to be purely platonic. There were, of course, special interests in abundance to emphasize the various brands of peace in our time. Lord Cecil intervened strongly in a letter to a correspondent who had asked how he should vote, and had given the impartial answer which in fact involved a censure on Conservative candidates. The assurances he asked for were those which it was easier for Liberal and Labour candidates to give. On the home front Lloyd George made the pace with the dynamic pamphlet 'We Can Conquer Unemployment', the policy of which

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Labour ignored, reviled, and aped in a remarkably short space of time.

The Conservatives were relying largely on Churchill's last Budget, but on the whole it was quiet, and to that extent disappointing. It looked as though no life would be given to that great occasion. Speakers were merely using the House to address their constituents, and debate was, by tacit arrangement between the parties, becoming perfunctory. Then Snowden rose. 'I was making', he writes in his autobiography, 'an ordinary speech in criticism of Mr. Churchill's four years' record as Chancellor of the Exchequer when I made a reference to the Debt Agreements he had recently concluded with France and Italy.' He describes how he denounced these agreements as being an unfair imposition on the British taxpayer, the French debt being reduced by sixty-two per cent and the Italian by eighty-six per cent. Thus the taxpayer was left with the remission, as these debts were part of our own War Debt. Further, as far as France was concerned, the remission was to a country that had already repudiated four-fifths of her National Debt. He talked about British people who had taken out French loans during the war practically ruined by France's 'bilking' of her national obligations. He said Labour policy favoured an all-round cancellation of war debts and reparations, but until then there must be fair-play for Britain.

'I then made', he says, 'an observation which was the cause of the row that followed. I said that we had never subscribed to that part of the Balfour Note which laid down that until there was an all-round cancellation of debts and reparations we should not take from our debtors more than was sufficient to pay our debt to America. The Labour Party would hold itself open if circumstances arose to repudiate that condition of the Balfour Note.' Churchill at once sensed the electoral possibilities in this blunt statement. The Cabinet

sat on it the next morning, and there followed a portentous attack on Labour. Snowden's remark was described by Sir Laming Worthington Evans, the Minister for War, as 'a reckless wanton act'. Eden, too, was given a chance to enter the fray. Once again he asserted how undesirable it was to be a lender or a borrower. The overwhelming fact was that if we were to be so unwise as to open up again the question of inter-allied debts the harm to our trade would be much greater than any benefit we could hope to reap, even were we to receive full payment for every penny owed to us. According to Eden, Snowden's attitude to the general problem was 'incredible' and 'bad enough' while to the Balfour Declaration it was 'very much worse'. This declaration, he said, may be termed the foundation-stone upon which the structure of economic Europe has been rebuilt since the Armistice. Eden took it upon himself deeply to regret the consequences of those words. 'If Mr. Snowden felt such resentment at the terms granted to France and Italy that his ire boiled within him, that was bad enough but excusable. But when he combines suddenly and most unexpectedly a John Bull aggressiveness with a Shylock sinister cynicism, the combination is not one which the country would approve or which will raise our credit abroad.' Snowden had asserted that but for the human and financial help of Great Britain France would not be an independent country to-day. If it had not been for French resistance would Great Britain have been an independent country to-day? Eden asked angrily. 'I could not help feeling that if the right honourable gentleman had come forward in the war days more wholeheartedly on the side of the Allies he might not have felt so bitterly now against France.'

The rest of the speech was devoted to praising the Chancellor for taking the duty off tea. 'Some of us welcome it sincerely, while others welcome it with the fear that those outside may welcome it still more', and to drawing attention to the burden of direct taxation. Eden has on more than one

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occasion stressed the adverse effect of the high direct tax on gilt-edged investment. How can we cut the vicious circle, he asked. 'There seems to be only one way, and that is for the next Conservative administration during the next five years to devote its efforts continuously to reducing payment by payment our expenditure.' Once again he tried to get at Protection by the back-door, this time by a gentle recommendation that, because competition is very keen, our financial, industrial, and fiscal policy should be more closely co-ordinated and that we should not despise an attempt to earmark the use to which our foreign loans are put. No doubt it was generally true that by process of natural economic forces the profit from these loans would accrue in increased export trade. But was that absolutely true in the world of 1929? We were actually discouraging these loans by putting a two per cent tax upon them. Since the war the Argentine had borrowed £70,000,000 from New York and nothing from London. 'No one can tell me it is because the countries of South America do not want to float their loans in London.' But the two per cent tax had something to do with their hesitancy. Trade follows loans, and for the moment New York was getting both. He quoted the Colwyn report which bore out his adverse view of the duty. 'We shall have next year, I presume, another Conservative administration producing another Conservative Budget.' In the meanwhile perhaps the effect of this duty might be considered.

Finally it was not for Socialists to criticize the Chancellor of the Exchequer for failing to fulfil impossible expectations. He had at his disposal meagre material. Eden sometimes wondered whether the Opposition should not come down to the debates, bearing in mind their £80,000,000 responsibility, like the burghers of Calais 'barefooted with ropes—silken ropes if you like—round their necks offering a humble apology to my right honourable friend, not for a gallant defence but for a supine ineptitude in the hour of crisis which

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has cost the country a great price. Every Socialist administration should listen to every Budget upon its knees until it has made atonement for the losses which it has brought about.'

Mr. Bromley, the Labour member who followed, said he would not have taken part in the debate but for the earlier remarks of the honourable and gallant member for Warwick and Leamington. No doubt they were the outcome of the grave danger the Conservative Party was in at the coming election. When the front bench lions roar, the smaller quadrupeds are bound to roar in the same strain!

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Eden's was undoubtedly a naughty speech, and it was soon shown to be tactically unsound as well. Snowden's plain speaking on the taxpayers' behalf made an immediate appeal. Many Conservative interests, hard hit by the stabilization of the franc, were favourably impressed. On the other hand MacDonald, anxious to maintain a good understanding with France, was alarmed at the deplorable effect of Snowden's words on French opinion. A generous foreign policy was Labour's clearest objective. So the conflicting Party policies conspired to subordinate the War Debt issue. Eden did not drop it at once, and repeated his diatribe with some vigour at Leamington. Snowden for his part stuck to his guns, and records it as his opinion that if all Labour candidates had similarly stressed the iniquity of the debt settlement Labour would have been in with a clear majority over both Conservatives and Liberals. As it was Labour did well enough, raising their numbers in the House of Commons to 289, an increase of 137 on the previous Parliament. The Conservatives dropped 155 seats and returned altogether 260 members, while the Liberals, in spite of an heroic effort, were unable to get more than fifty members back. In terms of votes their unemployment manifesto had stronger support than the result suggests; while the Conservatives, who at the last moment had fallen back on a personality parade of

Stanley Baldwin—his photograph under the caption ‘Safety First’—could still command the biggest aggregate.

At this election Eden had to face a three-cornered fight, but he entered it with the utmost vigour. During the six years that he had represented the constituency he had been assiduous in furthering its parliamentary interests. He had been careful to avoid controversy with the National Farmers’ Union, and was no doubt regarded as reasonably sound on the Preference issue. The wheels of his Association ran smoothly, and good reports of Leamington’s promising young member were spreading throughout the constituency. Yet it was in many ways the most difficult election he had to fight. The Liberal candidate who succeeded to George Nicholls was a Captain Walter Dingley, who came from Stratford, and described himself as ‘The Local and Liberal Candidate’; while Labour was represented by Mr. G. C. Garton. Dingley put the peace issue first. Our support for the League in all its activities must be wholehearted and zealous. Unemployment without specific reference to Lloyd George came next. The Liberal Party, in so far as it was not identified with a particular class, alone could solve the problem in a businesslike manner. He did not allow Eden a free run on business economy and stressed that ‘as your representative I should regard it as my duty to see that every penny of your money spent through State Departments should go as far as you would make it go privately’. Liberalism, too, challenged Eden’s prerogative by making a definite appeal to women—a suit which the Labour candidate, Mr. G. C. Garton, somewhat unwisely forgot to press. Mr. Garton presented his compliments, and in his election address appeared in pince-nez and an open-neck shirt. He pointed out that having been employed for twelve years as an engineer in one of the largest electrical engineering works in the country, he could claim to have had practical experience of industry and the needs of the workers. His line was to make it clear that Labour was safe.

It did not believe in revolution or in sudden confiscation. It believed in making carefully thought out changes by constitutional methods. He made a special appeal that the elector should not waste his vote on the Liberal Party. Every object of the old Radical party was included in Labour's programme. According to Mr. Garton, the Liberal Party, financed by wealthy men, had declared its intention of voting with the Conservatives if no party had a majority after the election. The effect of the 'Flapper Vote' was to increase Warwick and Leamington's electoral register from 44,000 to 62,500.

In the circumstances—a new vote, a losing cause, and a third candidate—Eden had every reason to be satisfied with the result. He was returned with a majority of 5,460 and a total of 23,045 votes. Dingley polled 17,585, and Garton 7,741. In truth all three candidates had some reason to be pleased with themselves. The last three-cornered fight had been in 1923, and both Eden and the Liberal were 6,000 up on their previous vote; while Labour, which had not fought the constituency since then, was 3,700 up on Lady Warwick's figure. The 1929 election was as a whole indecisive. The result was in line with the attitude of the electorate throughout the country. The nation had given its verdict on what it did *not* want; what its positive wishes were it left the legislators to puzzle out for themselves.

Chapter XI



EXPERIMENTS IN OPPOSITION

FOR EDEN the formation of the new Labour Government brought to an end the phase in his career which we can most conveniently summarize as the 'period of apprenticeship'. He had established himself as a parliamentary debater; the influence of friendly third parties to obtain for him the Speaker's eye was no longer necessary. His work with Sir Austen Chamberlain gave him an almost *ex-officio* authority to speak on foreign affairs from the now depleted ranks of Conservative Opposition. All the evidence suggests that Eden had been impressed by Sir Austen's personality and diplomatic method. If it was the exact contrary to his original intentions, circumstances had forced Sir Austen to become the apostle of direct contact and discussion. Eden had been able to see for himself at very close range the full potentialities of this new departure in the conduct of our foreign relations. However, in spite of one or two pious assertions, there are few signs that Eden was prepared fully to apply a world outlook to the demands of our day-to-day policy. On the contrary it would seem that he started from a position somewhere to the right of Locarno, and only by a big mental effort brought himself into line with this flamboyant if limited liability.

To Chamberlain's sensitive mind friendship with France was very largely a matter of culture; for Eden—equally sensitive, but with the impact of the battlefields in adolescence—it was a literal matter of life and death. From the beginning we find Eden a sound tactician, selecting the issue, feeling after the emphasis, intellectually and emotionally at home with compromise, but in his pleas for friendship with France we detect a deeper strain of sincerity. It is this very generosity which perhaps helps to explain a certain blindness

to the opportunities that were missed during Chamberlain's tenure of the Foreign Office. Yet if Eden did not realize an element of danger in Chamberlain's attitude, the absence of cramping responsibility made it possible for him on more than one occasion to take a wider view than his chief.

He had also staked a claim to public attention as a genuine if not a particularly profound Imperialist, although from the orthodox Conservative point of view his was Imperialism with a difference. First, the Empire was an essential unit in our foreign policy. Carlton Club Conservatism no doubt regarded Chamberlain's plea to call in the Dominions before accepting the Kellogg Pact as a useful device to put off the embarrassing attention of an American idealist. For Eden and those of his persuasion explicit and considered Imperial collaboration was an essential preliminary to the consideration, much less the signing, of any peace treaty. Then again Eden was a Protectionist more out of his faith in the Empire than out of his belief in Protection. During the last few months the Conservatives had split over safeguarding. The Radical in Churchill had struck the Reactionary in Joynson-Hicks. Baldwin had been forced back upon proclaiming 'the many-sidedness' of truth; but it would seem that his sympathies were with the position Eden was taking up. Until Lord Beaverbrook made the pace too hot and turned Empire Free Trade into an anti-Baldwin crusade, Eden's attitude can be regarded as a factor in his growing influence with those in high places. To home affairs his contribution had been modest. There were gaps in his knowledge and from the start he staked heavily on being able to play the rôle of expert. It should be noted, however, that at the Conservative Conference at Yarmouth in 1928 it was Eden who was called upon to move on behalf of the party and of Conservative members of Parliament the compromise resolution on Lords Reform. This was one of the many issues on which Stanley Baldwin's Conservatism was suspect and those who resented his anarchic tendencies were tempted to hold the sword of the Second

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Chamber over his head. It was a notable sign of the party's confidence in Eden that he should have been entrusted with this particular mission. He acquitted himself well and with a lightness of touch that must have given satisfaction to Baldwin's subtle mind.

The period of the second Labour Government was one in which Eden was able to stretch his parliamentary legs and consolidate his status. After a rather unedifying wrangle over the spoils Arthur Henderson took office as Foreign Secretary and made a thorough success of his job. He was a man of persistent purpose and steady ideals, a patient if slow-moving negotiator. The material for weighty criticism during this period of our diplomacy was meagre and Eden straight away, on the third day of the Debate on the Address when Foreign Affairs were up for consideration, entered into a rearguard action from which he was not fully to emerge for the next two years. Henderson had referred to a resumption of Anglo-Soviet relations, provided the subversive activities—amply cited by Sir Austen in a lurid extract from the *Pravda*—were brought to a close first. All Eden could say was that in a few months' time honourable members opposite might take a rather different view of the speech and would do well to restrain their hilarity until they were satisfied that Mr. Henderson was able to restrain the Third International. The remainder of the speech was a laborious defence of the Conservative Government's attitude to the Optional Clause and the Rhineland evacuation on the grounds that the Socialists, instead of rushing into fulfil their election pledges, were simply maintaining the good precedents set by Sir Austen Chamberlain. Over the Optional Clause Mr. Henderson proposed to consult the Dominions first—'When a Conservative Government do it, it is wrong, when the right honourable gentleman does it it is right.' As for the Rhineland we cannot withdraw, says Mr Henderson, until we can get agreement with the French—'quite right now, quite wrong a few weeks ago.' So to a vain regret that the Conservatives should

have been made the victims during the election of such wanton manifestos. Otherwise there could be no blame of Mr. Henderson, only congratulation on his version.

The militant Mr. Wedgwood was suitably rebuked. He seemed to have a quarrel with Sir Austen because Sir Austen did not quarrel with every single Government which did not happen to share his own political views—‘He is more dangerous and bellicose than any Junker Prussian at his worst, and although we all feel a great friendship towards him in this House we are devotedly thankful that he has nothing to do with our international affairs.’ Again, the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister were resolved to further the good relations of this country with America. Eden put in a protest against the argument that the late Government had done nothing to that end. The Debt Settlement had removed a very potent source of possible misunderstanding. He was glad the Prime Minister did not expect remarkable results at once and was not going to be hurried. Eden had been rather afraid that the re-emergence of MacDonald with stories of ‘night journeys and gathering in the Highlands’ meant that we were in for a ‘sensational and romantic phase which could never result in anything good.’ He wished the Prime Minister every success but reminded him that if the achievements of the late Government were not visible on the surface they were nevertheless effective. An examination of the speeches of Mr. Kellogg and Mr. Norman Davis would confirm the marked improvement in Anglo-American relations over the past eighteen months. Finally he noted that the Prime Minister had modified his views on Minorities, and he brought a skeleton out of the party cupboard in the form of a *Sunday Times* article which Mr MacDonald had written long ago without any intention of its being published when he was Prime Minister. That explanation might allay Europe’s uneasiness but it made ‘our charge against the Prime Minister more serious than it was before. What in reality he did was to write an article which was intended to embarrass his predecessor

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but has actually come to book and embarrassed himself.' If Sir Austen had still been at the Foreign Office that article must have proved most embarrassing to him, for 'it would be difficult to find a series of sentences more nicely calculated to offend.' The new Foreign Secretary was succeeding to a happier lot than his predecessors. 'I believe that in the world at large there is a greater measure of security than these post-war years have known', and that Sir Austen Chamberlain had played his part in producing that result—a part for which the country owed him a debt of gratitude.

All Eden could add to this somewhat melancholy tirade before the adjournment were a couple of anxious questions about the Optional Clause, on which he could get no assurance, and about the strained relations between China and Russia. During the vacation the Socialists met with a number of spectacular successes. Henderson recalled the militant Lord Lloyd from Egypt and reached a comprehensive and generous settlement of outstanding disputes with the Egyptian Government. With remarkable tact and patience he presided over the Political Commission of the Hague Conference and brought about complete agreement between France, Belgium, and Germany on the future control of the Rhineland provinces. Snowden by entirely opposite methods of unqualified brusqueness emerged from the Reparations Conference a national hero, while MacDonald had made such progress with the Anglo-American naval talks that he booked his passage to the States to seal the bonds of brotherly love with President Hoover and, in his own words, 'narrow the Atlantic'. Without waiting for the Dominions, Henderson signed the Optional Clause which bound Great Britain to refer all disputes with other nations to the arbitration of the Permanent Court of International Justice. We made the reservations over which Eden had been so worried. Progress with Russia was surprisingly enough rather slower, but by the end of September agreement was reached on procedure for further negotiations. In home affairs there was no compar-

able achievement and, as Baldwin aptly pointed out, "the Government had availed themselves of the parliamentary recess to take a holiday from Socialism."

When Parliament resumed Eden busied himself with a number of topics. He explained his reasons for supporting capital punishment in a perennial private member's motion on the subject. The House should pause before it removed a distinction in crime by lessening the penalty against the most heinous offences and bringing it down to the level of less serious offences. If capital punishment was a deterrent, all appeals to sentiment should be banished from our minds. But no one will deny that the greatest deterrent in our minds is the fear of death. Certainly there was no substitute for it. If that is so were we right in removing it? Comparative statistics with other countries did not help because so much depends on the English point of view and on the English character. He took an active part in the protracted committee stage of the Widow's Pension Bill. The Conservatives, it is reported, moved a large number of amendments which, while ostensibly designed to remove anomalies from the Bill, had no other effect than to take up a great deal of valuable parliamentary time. Eden entered into the technicalities, and on one occasion had a lively duel with the redoubtable Jack Jones.

The debate on the resumption of diplomatic relations with Russia produced but few of the fireworks of 1924. The somewhat lukewarm negotiations between M. Dovgalevski and Mr. Henderson, which had at one stage been brusquely broken off, gave the Conservatives some grounds for implying that the Russians were not going to give up their insidious propaganda and that the Labour Party were not in a position to prevent it. On the whole Eden overstated his case. Mr. Henderson had pursued 'the worst method of diplomacy that any statesman of this country could ever follow. He had combined strength of speech with weakness in action, and 'you can do no greater disservice to your own country's

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prestige in international affairs than to pursue that policy.' It was likely to do more harm than 'the ludicrous performance of 1924.' What was the Government going to gain by these murky and muddled methods of diplomacy? Trade? France recognized the Soviet from the beginning, but there had been no increase in trade. We should do business with Russia whether there were diplomatic relations or not, provided the mutual desire of nations to trade continued to exist. 'I deplore the fact we have not pursued throughout the attitude of the United States. More important than an exchange of representatives was an exchange of guarantees, because no doubt within a year we shall find the Foreign Office liberally bespattered with protests and exhortations to the Soviet Government to behave itself.'

The Foreign Secretary was like La Fontaine's frog. 'He puffed himself out, he spoke very big and the bigger he spoke the bigger he grew until at last he cracked, his big words burst him, and when he came to actual action there was nothing left but a punctured carcass to maintain against the Soviet Government.' This language was ladylike in comparison with that used at the Conservative conference about the same time, which talked freely of Communist Cads and Red Roubles. It must be admitted that the Soviet Government did not make matters particularly easy for Mr. Henderson, showing throughout a peculiar insensitiveness to the position of the Labour Party in this country, and supplying *The Times* at regular intervals with the ammunition it urgently needed.

It is interesting to note that Eden asked a number of pertinent questions about a crisis in Manchuria now completely forgotten and which died down almost as suddenly as it arose. The potential aggressor at the end of 1929 was Russia, and although international action was considered, the difficulty which Mr. Henderson was forced to stress was that Russia was not a member of the League. The Conservative line was to press for the invocation of the Covenant, and we find Eden joined by Lord Winterton and Sir Kingsley Wood, arguing

strongly that the Covenant was intended to cover cases where one of the protagonists to a dispute was not in fact a member. In this instance Henderson relied more on the symbolic strength of the Kellogg Pact, and largely as a result of representations under its auspices the situation was relieved. But that the Conservatives seriously urged the use of the Covenant in this instance is a significant sidelight on the vagaries of party doctrine.

At the end of November Eden scored a notable hit by raising on the adjournment the issue of the Singapore Naval Base. In the twenty minutes at his and the Labour spokesman's disposal, Eden managed to get in a number of pertinent questions about Imperial collaboration. Had the Dominions and Colonies been consulted on the Government's policy or merely informed of it? The Under-Secretary might try and excuse himself on the grounds that only a postponement was involved. But to postpone work at Singapore was in fact a change of policy. That this issue should have to be raised at all was the fault of the Government—'*Vous l'avez voulu Georges Dandin.*' Mr. Ponsonby, the Under-Secretary, gave an extremely diffuse and unsatisfactory reply, which enabled the Conservatives to voice their indignation at greater length later on.

The day before the House adjourned for Christmas Eden intervened in a full-dress debate on Egypt—with whose troubled affairs he had been closely concerned when working for Sir Austen Chamberlain. He had seen the breakdown of the negotiations with Sarwat Pasha and the ultimatum following Sarwat's defeat. It had been the period of Lord Lloyd's dominance and a none too happy chapter in the story of our Near Eastern Imperialism. The Labour Government had engineered the recall of Lord Lloyd, but there were still a good many scores to settle both in Egypt and in England. Labour was set upon a policy of appeasement but the journey was to prove hazardous and a final settlement was not to be reached for several years. Peace with Egypt was

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reserved to be one of Eden's triumphs, but his speech in the dreary conflicts of 1929 showed to the full his masterly grip of the subject and that any diplomatic success with which in future he might be identified in that part of the world would be no lucky accident. He divided his speech into two parts. First, the importance of Egypt and the Suez as links in the chain of Imperial Defence, and second, the development of the Egyptian people and their friendship with Great Britain. These were separate but not incompatible themes. Churchill had issued one of his more magniloquent warnings, but Eden urged that there was no need at present for some of these alarmist expressions to which the House had listened. He stressed the importance yet again of the Dominions' attitude to the Suez. It might be our Back Door to the East, it was—particularly in the case of Australia and New Zealand—their Front Door to Europe. He offered a wealth of advice on the military problems of the Suez zone. It was less than twenty miles deep, was that enough? The conditions under which the battalions stationed there were living were in his opinion highly unsatisfactory. 'I confess there is nothing I should like less than to be stationed near the Canal for any long period of time. No one acquainted with the conditions there could view that prospect with enthusiasm.' But the job of safeguarding the health of a large body of troops in that district would take not three or five but probably twenty years to complete. Some alternative billet to Cairo and the Canal should be found.

The Sarwat Treaty had been modified. British personnel was to be removed from the Egyptian army, and, worse than that, the European Department of the Ministry of the Interior was to be closed down. There seemed to Eden to be no good case for either of these decisions. The associations of the British officers with the Egyptian army had been almost unanimously happy, and while the Egyptian Government was concerned not simply with British residents but with 'one of the largest foreign colonies in the world,' surely our expert

advice would have helped. Equally it was a pity that all British control over the Egyptian police was to go. It was not that we were wanting to be the dragooning hand over Egypt, but merely a plea for experienced advisers if a period of transition was to be successful. He went on to develop the ambiguities affecting the rights of foreigners in Egypt. When the Egyptian Government failed to maintain law and order, was the responsibility for foreigners to be referred back to the British Government? And who was to decide that the Egyptian Government was not fulfilling its functions? How was our status affected by the Optional Clause? Did the 1922 reservations still hold good? Was the intervention of a foreign power in Egypt still 'an unfriendly act'? Our responsibility for Egypt was real. We had virtually saved the country from bankruptcy and had multiplied the productivity of its soil by about three hundred times. But he urged that genuine satisfaction should not turn into unimaginative complacency. Because Parliamentary institutions were good for us it did not follow that they spelt progress or happiness for the people of Egypt. 'The Nordic races up to a point have worked Parliamentary Government fairly well, but there your proof stops. The European examples of 1929 of those States which had found it impracticable to work Parliamentary Government were Spain, Italy, and Jugoslavia. In the Middle East the evidence was far more emphatic. You cannot find a more acute and quieter people than the Persians—but Parliament was not for them. There were the Turks with all the stability essential for debate, but Parliament was not for them. They preferred benevolent or malevolent autocracy. If possible benevolent, but malevolent was better to them than democracy as we know it.

There was one instance where Eden felt a really democratic Government might succeed and that was among the Arab tribes of Hejaz and Yemen. 'I would suggest to the Foreign Secretary that if he wants a holiday task he might go along with his Parliamentary Private Secretary to Arabia and

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try to set up a new Parliament there. But I would advise him to keep a swift camel at hand in case he had to remove himself faster than he might wish to do.' But it was more feasible there than in Egypt. There it was a sham and a mockery, no one knows what the election is about. It was 'sentimental' slobber to talk about Parliamentary institutions to a people that do not understand or want to understand. The prospective Eden asked for he quoted from the Persian poet Hafiz: 'When the ocean has delivered the pearl, what further concern have we with the ocean?' Mr. Henderson's view was too much 'when Egypt has delivered its Parliament, what further use have we for Egypt's internal affairs?' Eden's concern was more for the millions of Egyptians that constitute the ocean than for a pearl of doubtful lustre. His speech ended with a further criticism based on local knowledge. Why was the Government returning an Egyptian battalion to the Sudan? The Sudanese detested Egyptian government and had every reason to do so. We shall be for ever shamed if we abjure our responsibilities to the Sudan. He asked that the return of this battalion should be merely an act of grace in no way construed as an emblem of government.

On Egypt Eden could speak with unqualified authority. The ground was not so secure under his feet when he opened the New Year with a speech against the motion calling on the House to approve Great Britain's signature to the Optional Clause, for in this debate he had to follow a maiden speech of the most formidable dialectic quality by that great internationalist Norman Angell. That Angell should have had to wait so many years for his first opportunity to address the House of Commons is a commentary chiefly on the shortcomings of the British electorate, but it is perhaps true to say that his almost uncanny grip of rational argument was calculated to produce more sympathetic attention inside Parliament than on the hustings. Sir Austen Chamberlain had talked about a difference in degree between the Labour and the Conservative approach to foreign affairs. Angell felt

that the degree was so great as to constitute a difference in kind. The Conservative emphasis he described as not being directed so much at making war less likely as upon being sure of winning the war when it came. The emphasis on the Liberal and Labour side of the House, he suggested, was to make the contingency of war improbable altogether. The distinction involved vital differences of policy. The Conservative implication was that every time we sacrificed any freedom of action, we sacrificed a useful tool of defence. Angell desired to move as rapidly as may be towards an international order, not from any abstract ideal considerations, but because only in the creation of it could this country find security in the vital processes by which it lives. The moral of the old order was that we had to burn down our house in order to prevent it being robbed.

He developed with astonishing skill his famous thesis on the fallacy of defence. Kellogg had suggested that the test of a defensive war was resistance to invasion, but that was to condemn every foreign war in which America had been engaged. 'Look at our own history. We are very proud of it, and as an Englishman I am prepared to plead that all our wars were defensive. I want to keep out the ironic note, because the more you take the view that our wars were truly defensive, the more you are piling up the argument to sign the Optional Clause.' Apart from Greenland, Great Britain itself was the only country over the past eight hundred years in which a British army had not fought a foreign foe. The old order defied both arithmetic and morals. 'On behalf of your own security you must always be claiming rights you will not accord to the other fellow.' We had an interest in internationalism beyond the prevention of war. There were seven thousand miles more of tariff wall since the war—the result of the nationalist impulse as opposed to the international habit of mind. In a whole range of human affairs the factor which made the difference between what was practical and what was not was the factor of the human will. If

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now we decide that the time has come for this country to give a lead and to give reality to these international institutions and, if we go forward, it is that decision, the decision that is practical, which will make it practical.

How strongly during his period of office and power has Eden been identified in popular estimation with some such progressive vision of the foreign scene! But how meagre his first reaction to the message! Admittedly Angell had rather severely criticized the late Foreign Secretary for his suspicions of Article XVI of the Covenant, but Eden, though congratulating him on a very exceptional maiden speech and for his oratory and earnestness, counter-attacked at once. He might be something of a heretic about the Optional Clause, but in his view something of a legend had grown round it. Norman Angell was suffering just a little from the effect of the legend. What Angell had said applied to the League Covenant to which we have already subscribed. However important the consequences of the Optional Clause might be, it marked no fundamental departure in principle from previous practice. It was simply a question of whether this country preferred arbitration to war, the answer had been given long ago. We preferred arbitration and had said so in treaties and other documents over and over again. The Optional Clause was asking us to accept a particular form of arbitration to meet a particular set of disputes. Our record in Arbitration as a whole was second to none, but was this particular addition of the Optional—he preferred to call it the obligatory—Clause a sound business proposition? That was the sole basis on which the House should consider it. International law was a vast uncertainty, but there were two broad interpretations, the Anglo-American and the Continental. The Optional Clause was too deeply ingrained with the Continental bias. It was alien to our method. He cited Lord Hailsham and, to satisfy Labour, Lord Haldane. Haldane had talked about Article XIII of the Covenant being less stringent than the Optional Clause and ‘giving rise to less embarrassment.’ Eden attacked

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mentary duties with a firm resolve. It was uphill work. The Labour Government's foreign policy continued to flourish and Henderson was all the while reinforced with brilliant back-bench support. Once again it was domestic affairs which slid away from its grasp. From the very beginning the financial situation was serious. Unemployment increased, revenue fell. Churchill's de-rating scheme, which had had such a cold reception when the Conservatives were in power, laid heavy burdens for his successor at the Exchequer. The result was that Snowden had to face a prospective deficit of forty-seven millions in his first Budget. Additions to income tax, the tax on beer, super-tax, and death duties met immediate needs. But his stern financial orthodoxy earned him few thanks. The Right screamed for Protection, the Left for public works. Conservative speakers referred to him as having a mind that went back to 1880, but for Eden that was several centuries too forward; he thought the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a medieval mind. He would have made an admirable minister for the Medici. He could have applied the thumbscrew, the rack and the stake ruthlessly and happily in the cause of 'the fiscal bigotry' he so consistently maintained.

Eden then went on—in the case of this particular Budget debate—to make a very frank admission about the attitude of himself and his generation to the historic controversy of Free Trade versus Protection. 'Perhaps it is true of the younger members,' he confessed, 'certainly the younger members of our party, that we are merely opportunists in these fiscal matters. I, personally, am prepared to plead guilty to the charge. It seems to me that the only useful test which can be applied in these fiscal controversies which have no academic interest whatever, is the result which is actually achieved.' This was one of the reasons why the Liberal Party was slowly but steadily fading away. He did not believe that the younger generation, which had no recollection of the great fiscal controversies of the early days of the century, was in the least interested in the Chancellor's doctrines when they were clearly

doing injury to our trade and causing suffering to our people. As for super-tax, it was playing with words to suggest that because you lay the burden on the super-taxpayer, it was he who was going to bear it. The extra burden always percolated through all sections of the community. In this context Eden's Protectionism appears somewhat scanty and forgetful.

He was more at ease condoling with the Government over the comparative failure of the London Naval Conference that had been inaugurated under such ambitious and happy auspices. He detected at the root of the Government's dilemma an essential incoherence. He asked the Government to leave off gilding the lily of Anglo-American friendship—'a very pleasing but now happily unnecessary pastime—in order to grasp some of the thistles that were flourishing in the European garden.' Then rather surprisingly: 'What the Government should be considering to-day is the movement for the economic federation of Europe. There is for instance the proposal of M. Briand, who is above all things a practical statesman, for a United States of Europe. His motto was a paraphrase from Burke, "we had to contrive so to be Imperialists as not to forget that we are Europeans, and co-ordinate our Imperialism with our existing but not always pleasant European responsibilities."' All through the session we find Eden asking anxious questions about the Government's intentions on a revision of the Covenant, and it is fair to suggest that his anxiety was the outcome of a very lively appreciation of the nature of our existing obligations. All through his caveats have a genuine ring about them, and are based on a belief that if we carried out the spirit and the letter of our word already given, we would have our hands full but could make the system work.

He was even more opposed to the verbose commitment of the General Act to which we agreed in March 1931 than to the special liabilities of the Optional Clause. In the debate on the General Act,¹ he recalled from his personal experience the

¹ On March 9, 1931.

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desire of the Assembly in 1928 that the document on which it was based was intended to be simply a guide for nations anxious to negotiate bilateral treaties. We were now dangerously extending its meaning and challenging the authority of the Council. While the most encouraging feature to anyone who had watched the course of League affairs in recent years had been the growth of its authority, you want to secure support in the public mind for the authority which is to settle disputes. The public mind can easily appreciate the existence of a Council representative of the nations of the world as an authority, but if you are going to create other authorities, whether subsidiary to or above the Council, to which further reference can be made, then you are creating confusion. The Council was in Eden's judgment the real guardian of peace and 'you cannot have your legislation, your method and your procedure in these matters too simple.' The simpler they are the greater measure of national support they will receive. The procedure of the General Act was not an English device. 'I am a great believer,' he concluded, 'in the importance and value of Articles XI and XV of the Covenant. I do not think you want to override them or to detract from them.'

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In the early part of the year Empire Free Trade developed into a crusade against Baldwin. Beaverbrook and Rothermere launched what was virtually their own party, and Conservative leaders took a serious view of the situation. Baldwin succeeded in pricking the bubble of revolt by his usual method—namely, one big, devastating speech to his rank and file supporters. This time, however, he had to make unusually big concessions. Although he adhered to his pledge that food taxes would not be made an issue at the next election, he expressed his willingness to submit the question to the people by the extreme measure of a referendum. This was enough for

Beaverbrook, who at once returned to the Conservative Central Office with all the complacency of a prodigal son. But although this crisis was short and sharp it was symptomatic of a general restlessness among Conservatives over Baldwin's leadership. There had been heart-searchings over the result of the last election; there was the straightforward psychological need for a scapegoat—the easy-going Baldwin was the natural culprit and victim. All through the summer the sniping continued. At the end of September he was moved to issue an official statement that there was no truth in the report that he was intending soon to retire from the leadership of the Conservative Party.

In a letter to *The Times* of October 2nd, a good true-blue Tory, Sir Martin Conway, let the public know that Baldwin's policy was not inevitably the milk of the word. Sir Martin was member for the combined English Universities and so returned to Parliament by an extremely select and notoriously reactionary alternative vote. Like more than one back-bencher of the deplorable Coalition days, he combined his diehard sympathies with a sneaking affection for his patron, Mr. Lloyd George. Without expressing any opinion about the advisability or otherwise of Baldwin's retirement, he asserted that it could not be too soon or too emphatically stated that the rank and file of the party were not willing to give Mr. Baldwin a blank cheque to draw upon its fund of docility. He had imposed upon them measures they disliked, they had only passed them because of the unswerving party loyalty which is traditional among Tories. 'We were driven', he wrote, 'into the Lobby in support of Socialistic measures which a Labour Government might properly have introduced. . . . We were made to give votes to a mass of young women at a critical moment of their lives when they ought to be thinking about marriage rather than about voting. . . . If the country wants Socialism let it get it from an openly Socialistic Government, and not from a junta of crypto-Socialists who promise one thing and deliver another.' The

rank and file to any enthusiasm. He had been among his constituents and only one was in favour of Baldwin. He was not the only political leader to fall on evil days. He had become Prime Minister by a succession of accidents. 'He slipped into office to the surprise of both himself and his friends.' 'He has lacked presence and vigour, his work is done.' The country in its hour of trial called for fresh initiative. He offered as substitute Baldwin's particular *bête noir*, Sir Robert Horne. Two other M.P.'s wrote of their chief in terms that were hardly complimentary.

On the 6th October Eden intervened to take up the Baldwin cause in terms of the utmost vehemence. 'How delightful it must have been for Sir Martin Conway to find himself so completely in accord with all his constituents—but one. Rare unanimity and unhappy exception! . . . Mr. Baldwin must go, doughty dons confirm it. It is a pedagogic proposition, simple but complete. What more is there to say? Were Sir Martin to extend his inquiries beyond the confines of English University professors and beyond even the circle of readers of the most provincial Press in the world, the London penny newspapers, he might then find in our industrial cities a minority of more than one. He might even discover what the writer of this letter sincerely believes to be the truth, that Mr. Baldwin is still the most influential personal factor in contemporary English politics.' He should have seen Mr. Baldwin at the National Brotherhood Conference at Coventry (congenial Nonconformist surroundings, it should be noted). All the academic antimacassars would not then have sufficed to stifle him. If the Conservative Party jettisons Mr. Baldwin it will sacrifice its greatest electoral asset. 'But that is not of course the sole reason why many of us would deeply regret to see Mr. Baldwin relinquish the leadership of the Conservative Party.' For so long as he was leader 'so long will its "right wing" be unable to dominate the Party's counsels and narrow its purposes—of this the Trade Disputes Bill was a sufficient example; so long also will confidence

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persist that the Conservative Party can remain truly national both in the source of its strength and in the objectives of its policy. Nor with Mr. Baldwin as its leader will the Conservative Party ever sink to become the creature of millionaire newspaper owners or a mere appanage of big business.'

Opposition to a Socialist Government or the specialized discretion of a Parliamentary private secretaryship tended to conceal the key in which Eden's Conservatism was pitched. This letter was no new or sudden change. At the end of 1929 in a speech at Caxton Hall to the Unionist Canvassing Corps—a body whose be-all and end-all was how best to interpret and put across the Party's faith—Eden as the chief speaker had come out boldly for the theory of Co-partnership and for the motto 'every worker a capitalist!' The hungry sheep debate was continued—and duly ended—with everyone's righteousness upheld and everyone's conscience cleared.

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As the Government travelled on to its economic doom Eden spoke with increasing vigour on a wider range of topics. He was in a buoyant mood and sprinkled his oratory with the apt illusion. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour had been unduly pleased with the Government's unemployment insurance policy. Eden thought he was easily satisfied with extremely small results and at once reminded the House of Dr. Johnson's reply to the gentleman who discoursed at great length about the flea. 'It is a pity, Sir, that you have never met a lion, for a flea lasted you such a time that a lion would have served you a twelvemonth.'

Then again when Jimmy Maxton was burring his broadsides against the decadence of Socialism in office, Eden was reminded of the legend, no doubt familiar to Mr. Maxton, of the dialogue between St. Columba and St. Oran, 'St. Oran was dead and St. Columba, the faithful, was engaged in bury-

ing him. Unexpectedly, St. Oran came to life, and St. Columba the faithful was anxious to hear what St. Oran had to say of his experience in the other world. St. Oran said in one sentence, "Hell is not what we have been told to believe." Thereupon St. Columba hurriedly exclaimed, "Earth for the mouth of Oran, more earth!" In his attack on Snowden's self-denying ordinances in his first Budget, he pointed to the motives which led the Puritan to stop bear-baiting. It was not that he felt sympathy at all for the bear, but that he could not endure to see people amusing themselves.

As for the Alternative Vote, for which during this Parliament the Liberals were in duty bound to ask and the Socialists to debate, Eden found the arguments of Sir Herbert Samuel and his followers altogether too subtle. They misjudged the mentality of the average English elector. 'I do not believe that our electors go to the poll saying, "three cheers for A, a modified cheer for B, and down with C." Their attitude is "Three cheers for A and down with B and C."' He went on in this speech to give a frank estimate of the three-party system. 'Personally I do not enjoy a three-party system. I think we should go back to a two-party system in the national interest as soon as possible. The effect of the alternative vote would be to perpetuate three and even more parties. As for Sir Herbert Samuel himself, Eden once summed up the buoyancy of his dialectic by comparing it with Carlyle's description of Voltaire: 'He was always found at the top, less by his strength in swimming than by his lightness in floating.' This particular form of Oxford Union brilliance indulged in with restraint always rouses an appreciative response in the House, an assembly more addicted to wit than to humour, and on occasions cruel in its chill silence before the joke that is either stale or irrelevant.

An interesting parliamentary sketch of Eden during the Opposition phase of his career appears in *A Hundred Commissioners*, by James Johnston: the seven crowded years that have passed since the publication of this book have given a

peculiar piquancy to many of Mr. Johnston's dicta on the back-bench members of the period 1929-31. Several of those whom he picked out as promising have amply confirmed his shrewd estimates. He laid stress on Eden's good fortune; he had got through his apprenticeship while still very young, and he belonged to the gilded youth. 'He is highly polished, has the bearing and manner of an aristocrat that gives him distinction in a House where the aristocrat is so much rarer than in Parliaments of the past.' Eden contrasted well against a background of forceful business men, dull trade union secretaries, intellectual Labourists and aggressive proletarians. But Eden was an exceptional aristocrat, 'for there are aristocrats in the House who do not speak in the style expected from their class.' Although Eden had a fashionable air there was none of the indifference or indolence that often goes with it. 'He is intensely interested in politics, takes his parliamentary duties most seriously, devotes much study to political questions, and spares no labour to make himself efficient.'

The principal impression he conveyed to James Johnston was that of competence. 'He has done what only a few politicians take the trouble to do—he has trained his mind, and then he has set himself to master whatever subject he has desired to discuss. He does not create the impression of having raked together knowledge for some immediate debating purpose. He makes one feel that he has a previous familiarity with the subject. He thinks for himself and has a measure of intellectual independence.'

Finally Johnston notes that style is not just a physical or social attribute in Eden. In a Parliament where formlessness was 'a grievous fault' and among members who seemed to consider that 'shapeliness of build, balance of parts, grace of phrasing are all mere luxuries which modern purposeful speech cannot afford', Eden's speeches stood out as being carefully constructed and strongly marked out by those qualities 'which may all be included under the rhetorical virtue of gracefulness'. So there was a perfect correspondence

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between the speeches and the physical personality of the speaker. 'The tall, upright figure, the unhurried, well-modulated voice are both thoroughly in keeping with the tenor of the speaking, and if the ordinary auditor might expect more vigour from a promising politician it is to be remembered that the fashion in political speech to-day favours a quiet style.'

Chapter XII

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NATIONAL MINISTRIES

EDEN was to make one more speech before the financial deluge swept the Labour Government out of office—his last important speech as a back-bench private member until his resignation statement seven years later. The subject was Disarmament. The summer of 1931 was a turning point, not only in the history of this country, but also in the careers of nearly all our major and minor politicians. Although it brought Eden out of the realms of parliamentary promise into those of international performance, the process of transition was in his case astonishingly smooth and quiet. In all the welter of invective and alarm, frustration and victory, Eden somehow emerged Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the National Government—a promotion at once effortless, anonymous, inevitable.

Without attempting in any way to recapitulate the claim and counter-claim of those hectic days, which so vitally affected Eden's career and which are still too much with us to admit of historical judgment, this simple admission of Eden into the hierarchy of the Foreign Office is not wholly beyond the range of analysis. He arrived, but not just by accident. In the first place, in the two lean years of the Opposition he had spoken on all aspects of Foreign Affairs with steadily increasing power and prestige. The questions he asked were key questions. They bore relation to the activity of the Whips. As a Parliamentarian he had proved himself diligent and well informed. His manner was pleasing to those in high authority, nicely balanced between deference and self-assertion, but above all he was, as has been amply shown, a Baldwin man.

John Gunther in that kaleidoscopic masterpiece, *Inside*

Europe, is never at a loss. When information is lacking psychology comes to the rescue. We have it from him that Eden assumed in Baldwin's mind the qualities of a Conservative compensation for the humiliating Socialism of his own son Oliver. Gunther points to the physical similarity of Eden and Baldwin junior; but there is probably no need to look to any such romantic explanation of what was a straightforward, almost self-evident, political affinity. No serious rival had arisen among Eden's Tory contemporaries to challenge his pre-eminence in foreign affairs and he had backed Baldwin all the way and without reserve. There seems no reason to doubt but that he had been in genuine agreement with his leader on nearly every issue of policy, great and small, during all these formative years. Therefore, his fortunes were bound up with Baldwin's—more than once it had seemed that he was backing a losing cause, that it was to be hero-worship without a dividend. But the particular form of crisis from which the National Government emerged was particularly adapted to Baldwin's political technique—which was to move slowly and mysteriously in the performance of his wonders. One thing was clear, the Conservative Party had not gathered in sufficient credit to go to the nation as the natural alternative to a spendthrift and bankrupt Socialism. For the past two hundred and fifty years Great Britain has been governed by coalitions, and the instinct of the British people in a moment of crisis is to force the various factions to coalesce. The Labour Party may complain of a great conspiracy, of the tooth and claw of vested interest, but on the whole it would appear that a National Government with Mr. Baldwin and his followers with office but without supremacy was the solution congenial at once to the nation and to Mr. Baldwin.

For some time it was in doubt what form the compromise would take. Lord Snowden describes the inscrutable and secretive way Mr. MacDonald treated both the colleagues he was leaving and the colleagues he was to join. There are those

who say that the nautical frankness of King George V was the real force behind MacDonald's historic decisions. The Royal will was supposed to have asserted itself roughly along the lines that as Mr. MacDonald has got us into this mess it is for Mr. MacDonald to get us out of it, and that his resignation was thus unacceptable and should be slept upon. Snowden's view, which he expresses more than once in his autobiography, was that MacDonald did not feel any real regret at his break with Labour. 'Later developments', he adds acidly, 'have amply confirmed this belief.' Snowden tells how the day after the National Government was formed, MacDonald came into Snowden's room at Downing Street in very high spirits. 'I remarked to him that he would now find himself very popular in strange quarters. He replied, gleefully rubbing his hands, "Yes, to-morrow every duchess in London will be wanting to kiss me!"' MacDonald's complacency, however, was not fully understood at that time. During the critical hours Mr. MacDonald kept the National Government to himself. He had a meeting with the Opposition leaders, but Mr. Neville Chamberlain who was there declared a few days afterwards that he went to bed that night expecting that next day Mr. Baldwin would be asked to form a Government. But Baldwin was complacent too. Beyond the general theme that party principles must not be sacrificed he only made one fundamental reservation. He would not form a coalition with Mr. Lloyd George in it.

We have detected all through this hostility to Lloyd Georgian Liberalism in Eden—he inherited it from Baldwin. Baldwin is renowned for his friendliness, but he is also a long-term enemy. After the downfall of the Lloyd George coalition, in which he had taken such a dramatic part at the Carlton Club meeting, he is reputed to have emphasized beyond all shadow of doubt that he would never again serve under Lloyd George. All through the period of his predominance we find him up against the Tory of the old

Coalition days—well to his right in outlook yet beholden to Mr. Lloyd George for election to Parliament by coupon. It is not only orthodox Liberals who have found to their cost that Mr. Lloyd George, when he tampered with the Nonconformist conscience immediately after the war did grave damage to it; the Nonconformist Tory, like Mr. Baldwin, has suffered also. At all events Baldwin saw Mr. Lloyd George, whether in the rôle of friend or enemy, as the real menace to the National Government.

MacDonald went to see Lloyd George at Churt, but the negotiations were abortive. The Conservative Party was called together to approve the action of its leaders in joining the new National Front. It was one of those occasions—technically private—full reports of which are in due course in possession of many who were not there. According to the legend, an inexperienced young Conservative member got up from the back of the hall and put it to Mr. Baldwin that in view of the gravity of the crisis, the need for the fullest national representation, and the greatness of his war record, the least the Conservatives could do would be to invite Mr. Lloyd George to take part in the common task. Mr. Baldwin's reply, so the story runs, was polite but final. The last thing he wanted to do was to dictate to the party the terms of its resolutions, but if this particular one was carried he would have no option but to stand down from the Government. It has often been claimed that if only Mr. Lloyd George had been in his usual boisterous good health in September 1931, the history of Great Britain and the world would have been a different story; but it is more likely that Mr. Lloyd George, hale and hearty, would never, quite apart from his wishes in the matter, have been invited to join the new team.

The final crisis arose over the approval of the 10 per cent cut in unemployment benefit, and the Labour Government resigned. But within twenty-four hours the new Cabinet of the interim Government, which consisted only of ten senior

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ministers from all three parties, had been formed. Lord Reading, more as a gesture in the interests of national prestige than as a serious intention to return to the front line of politics, took temporary office as Foreign Secretary. Eden was appointed as his Under-Secretary, and so, an important point to remember, was in harness from the very beginning. Among those of the younger generation who were singled out for junior posts in the Ministry, were Malcolm MacDonald, Under-Secretary for Dominions; and Oliver Stanley, Home Office. Earl Stanhope was made Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, Sir Kingsley Wood to the Board of Education; Duff-Cooper was to become Financial Secretary to the War Office, and Walter Elliott to the Treasury. Thus the National Government contained the elements of perpetuity within it—the future dominance of the Conservatives was assured.

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The first National Government lasted from August 25 to November 6, 1931. During its seventy-three days of office this administration of all the talents lived on to see the flood of economic crisis seep through into the realms of politics. By the time the dam had been designed and the approval of the people sought and obtained, the world situation was in fact beyond control. At the most critical moment in the history of international relations since the war British foreign policy was technically and morally paralysed. In the first place, Lord Reading's only objective was to keep our policy in a state of animated if lordly suspense until a successor was found; but it was not possible for him to keep warm a seat on the Treasury Bench, and Eden with the best will in the world lacked the status to be an adequate deputy for him in the Commons. The hierarchy of the Foreign Office is rather more select and exalted than those of the other civil service departments, and it is often not realized that the Parliamentary Under-

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is ranked in terms of Foreign Office seniority below the Permanent Secretary: thus in terms of control over and reference to a document the order in 1931 was Reading, Vansittart, Eden: in 1938 it is technically Halifax, Cadogan, Butler—with Vansittart and Chamberlain interfering from above with function fairly clearly defined but not easily related to the accepted order of things. In the early days of September 1931 all Eden could do was to act as the *rapporteur* of grave events.

On September 18—a date in many ways as fatal for the long-range hopes of the peacemakers as August 4—following up a report that a portion of the South Manchurian Railway track had been destroyed by Chinese soldiers from the Petaying barracks, Japanese troops were mobilized, the barracks attacked and taken and the aerodrome and arsenal at Mukden seized. On September 23 Eden was asked for particulars and supplied the House with the latest information then available. Cantonese troops were advancing northwards towards the positions held by the Chinese Government's troops. No hostilities had broken out. 'News to-day indicates a partial withdrawal of Cantonese forces. The floods in the Yangtze are reported to be subsiding.' The full gravity of the news did not make immediate impact on members, and there were some facetious supplementary questions. Eden reported amid the ribaldry that the Chinese had brought the matter before the League Council. On the 24th he described how a special meeting of the Council had been held and an appeal sent to both Governments to abstain from any action that might aggravate the situation, and to take positive steps by way of Geneva to appease it. On September 30 Eden announced that the Japanese had reported the progressive withdrawal of their troops. The Japanese spokesman had also affirmed that Japan had no territorial designs on Manchuria. Question and answer went on until Mr. MacDonald resolved to clarify the National Government's position by

an appeal to the country. The last shred of control over events in the Far East was destroyed by this decision. While Eden was rallying his constituents at Leamington, the Japanese were penetrating the Manchurian hinterland and heading for Tsitsihar. But Manchuria was not an issue which disturbed a single vote at the General Election. At that time it was merely a conflict in embryo. To the public mind in this country conflict and disaster were inherent elements in the lives of those who had the misfortune to live so far away from us. The mere narration of those conflicts would not in itself bring them any nearer. Only when the issue between China and Japan was inextricably bound up with the machinery of League procedure was the nation moved to follow the drama with the interest usually associated with a Test Match. For the purposes of the election the financial crisis was so overwhelming as to need no detailed explanation.

All Eden did in his model Election Address was to ask for national unity to outlive the crisis. The Socialists had been unable to meet a situation of their own making. The National Government was then formed to save the State. 'At the cost of economics as unpalatable to us as to the Socialist Cabinet which had provisionally approved nine-tenths of them, the National Government balanced the Budget and staved off thereby a complete financial collapse, which must have involved the savings of rich and poor—wages, benefits and pensions alike—in total loss.' He asked for a free hand in order to balance our trade. For the first time in our history in a period of peace we are buying more from the foreigner than we are selling to him. This must be rectified, and the National Government must be at liberty to use any means necessary to this end—including tariffs. Thus it will be seen that Eden did not tie himself down to Snowden's wireless pledge made on behalf of the Government. Agriculture was promised protection in the abnormal situation. While 'the more food we can produce at home the sooner we shall restore our balance of trade. A prosperous

rural population will provide a better market for the output of our factories.' So the issue was that the return to power at the present time of the Socialist Party, lacking its responsible leaders, would be a calamity without parallel in our history. The effect on our credit and our welfare would be disastrous. A Government with the 'best elements' from each party was alone large enough for the emergency. It must be a Government with unmistakable authority both at home and abroad. 'Many important international conferences will no doubt be necessary in the near future.' If this country was to play its part its representatives would have to be in a position to 'speak unhesitatingly for the overwhelming majority of their fellow-countrymen and women.'

The response to this temperate yet direct appeal was overwhelming. Admittedly the prospective Liberal candidate had resigned himself to the plea of Nation before Party and withdrawn from the field in Eden's favour, which, considering Eden's persistent refusal to placate Liberals in the House of Commons, was better luck than he deserved. Mr. Garton, in spite of all his efforts to catch Prosperity and the Liberal vote by his advocacy of Free Trade, could not stand up against the whirlwind, and Eden was in with a mighty majority of 29,000 and an aggregate poll of 38,000. The Flapper Vote no doubt preferred Captain Anthony Eden's stiff collar and 'Guards' moustache (as it then was) to Mr. Garton's persistent pince-nez and open-neck shirt.

With Eden's triumphant victory at the General Election of 1931, the scope of his career immediately widened. The Government were in with what almost amounted to a totalitarian majority of 500. Debates accordingly did not reflect the urgency of the situation outside Parliament, and the opportunity came to Eden at once to represent his country at Geneva without his presence being unduly missed at Westminster.



DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS

An informal conference during a luncheon given by M. Delbos (*French Foreign Secretary*) to the delegates at the Nyon Conference, September 13th, 1937

Left to right (facing camera) : Litvinov, Dr. Schranz (Mayor of Nyon), and Eden.

Back to camera (left to right) : Rustu Aras of Turkey, and Delbos

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With the return of the second National Government Lord Reading felt that he had served his commission, asked to be relieved of it, and gave way to Sir John Simon who, apart from himself, was probably the most eminent Liberal lawyer in the country. For the purposes of Eden's career this change, together with the promotion of Mr. Neville Chamberlain from the Ministry of Health to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in the place of Snowden, who had retired on a peerage, were moves of the highest significance.

Sir John had no particular qualifications for the office of Foreign Secretary, but that was not in itself a reason why he should not be appointed to it. To the outside world it seemed as if he had run into politics simply because litigation was a theme neither high nor subtle enough for his capacious mind. It might at first sight seem that the complexities of post-war diplomacy were just his *métier*. Those who knew him better must have wondered whether he was quite the right man for the job. John Allsebrook Simon, who was to be Anthony Eden's colleague during three of the most vital years in the whole history of international relations, was a self-made man. As a member of that brilliant fraternity that adorned Wadham in the late nineties and included in addition to himself F. E. Smith, C. B. Fry, and F. W. Hirst, it was clear that he had gained a complete mastery over success. On the other hand, the overwhelming political impression that the young Simon made upon his contemporaries was one of moral earnestness. He spoke to them and was accepted by them as one having a more than usual Nonconformist authority: there were those who went so far as to believe that the prodigious Wadham scholar might one day assume the mantle of Gladstone. His 1897 advocacy is to be found in a small book which F. W. Hirst and J. S. Phillimore produced under the title of *Essays in Liberalism by Six Oxford Liberals*. Simon has left so little behind him which is an embarrassment to him to-day that his contribution to this book repays study. He has been moved on occasion to

dismiss it as an adolescent indiscretion, but it is considerably more than that, and its emphasis on the moral duties of Liberalism—its integrity and independence are ‘categorical imperatives’—help to explain the grandeur of his early reputation. Perhaps it was that success came too easily; whatever it was there seems to have set in a sort of fatty degeneration of his political conscience. When it came his turn to undergo the ordeal of the famous but formidable Countess of Carlisle’s scrutiny he was peremptorily weighed and found wanting. She was the arbiter of what constituted promise or the reverse in pre-war Liberalism, and her analysis of Simon after hearing him speak for the first time was, so the rumour ran, ‘A fish, my dear; a fish!’

When the war came Simon wobbled over conscription; when it was safely over he wobbled between Asquith and Lloyd George. L.G. despised him for his pains, and has always saved up his best invective for Sir John. The ambiguity of his attitude provoked Labour into defeat over the Campbell case, his hostile interpretation of Trade Union powers—though of a doubtful legal validity—brought the miners’ leaders to heel in 1926. At critical moments we find Simon playing a decisive though increasingly secretive rôle. The explanation is that he had marked out in his mind a point in terms of social and political security beyond which a Liberal could not safely go. As the years went by that point moved so far to the right that by the time the National Government was formed he had become a fully-fledged convert to the cause of reaction, a man who by process of trial by error had come to believe that to accept someone else’s initiative was only one degree less dangerous than to initiate a policy oneself, and that there was scope for action only in a laborious limitation of commitment. Such a man in such a mood was a disastrous chief for Eden to serve; but at first there was no clash. Simon’s speeches on Foreign Affairs had been relatively progressive. It is clear he did not anticipate responsibility in this field and that he felt free to stress the

literal meanings of the Covenant. But, to begin with, Eden was too preoccupied to maintain a very close contact with Simon; for in addition to the normal Council and Assembly duties, Eden was appointed British delegate to the ill-fated Disarmament Conference. Ultimately this very weight of detail and volume of experience was to accentuate the two men's differences of outlook; for the present Eden was too busy to consider them.

By the time the General Election was going on Japan was consolidating her gains in Manchuria. The machinery of the League was rumbling into action after the battle was over. It was Eden's tragedy that he was always to be confronted with the *fait accompli* and to be called upon to reverse or modify a situation or decision already reached. The full story behind the failure of the British and United States Governments to negotiate, much less to act in concert when confronted with the Japanese aggression which had extended to Shanghai, has yet to be told. Mr. Stimson, who was the American Secretary of State for Foreign Relations at the time, has set out the American case at length, and his book leaves a strong impression that the British Cabinet were not interested that even the semblance of solidarity should be shown. With America out of the League there was always the sense of irritation in London; but as far as Japan and Manchuria were concerned parallel action was always possible under the Washington Nine-Power Treaty, which is as near as America has ever got to a League undertaking.

January 9, 1932, is a fatal date in the chequered story of Anglo-American relations. On that day the British Government made formal explanation why this country could not join America in her protest, and why it was necessary to leave the United States to advocate the principles of international law and order on her own initiative. On the 8th February Eden proclaimed to the world in the mildest of answers that Great Britain was prepared to accept Japanese assurances. He was asked about the Japanese pro-

clamation of Manchuria's independence and of the breaking off of all diplomatic relations with the Chinese Government. Mr. Eden replied with all the delusive dexterity of the Foreign Office behind him, that he had no information beyond the Chinese Note to confirm the idea that the Japanese proposed to form an independent State. The Chinese in any case referred to a statement, not a note, and then 'His Majesty's Government have made no representations on the subject to the Japanese Government.' Mr. Seymour Cocks, Labour member for Broxtowe, who had put the first question, asked whether we still stood by Article I of the Nine-Power Treaty which together with the other signatories engaged us to accept the sovereignty, independence, territorial and administrative integrity of China. We did. Were there not Sir Austen's pledges in July 1928, when he said the British Government regarded Manchuria as part of China? There were. Would it not be desirable then to draw Japan's attention to the Chinese statement about a separate State in Manchuria? Mr. Eden: 'The Japanese Government have given very definite assurances both to His Majesty's Government and to the League that they intend to maintain their responsibilities under the Nine-Power Treaty and also to maintain the Open Door in Manchuria.'

For some time there had been an excuse for believing in Japan's assurances and apologies. As long as the comparatively Liberal Baron Shidehara was in power it could be contended that all reasonable efforts should be made to strengthen his hands against the militarist factions in Tokyo. Such efforts, as Stimson frankly admits, proved vain. Shidehara was blown away like an autumn leaf as soon as the challenge came from the Mothers' Union at Geneva—he had played for time, he had served the purpose of the militarists. Eden's acceptance of Japanese assurances with Shidehara gone in fact meant that the first blow had been struck at collective security. Perhaps it was the greatest blow, for it provided the precedent for all the militant anarchy that has

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followed in the last six years. How far Eden approved of the answers put into his mouth, it is of course impossible to say; but it should perhaps be stressed that not being a member of the Cabinet he was simply conveying to the House a decision which he was in no way to influence. At the time the full implications of the statement may not have been clear. There are good grounds for believing that progressive elements in the Cabinet—and there were some then—were not impressed by Stimson's plea, and felt that America should avoid invoking collective security when it was obvious that she had no serious intention of enforcing it, even if Great Britain and France did supply their quota. Norman Davis was in England and readily accessible to all who wanted to check up on the real potentialities of American policy in the Far East.

At the end of February Mr. Cocks, aided and abetted by the indefatigable Geoffrey Mander, had another shot at extracting a rather more heroic definition of our attitude. Was it not advisable that we should send notes both to China and Japan that this country would in no circumstances recognize any situation brought about by means contrary to the League or to any other treaty obligations to which we as well as China and Japan were parties? But according to Eden, His Majesty's Government had already made their position 'sufficiently clear', while the Japanese assurances were 'definite'.

MR. MANDER: 'Am I right in assuming that the policy outlined in the question is indeed the policy of the Government?'

MR. EDEN: 'The honourable Member would be more correct if he assumed that the Government's policy is the policy outlined in my answer.' There will be some who may choose to read into this distinction which Eden allows, if not his disapproval, then a certain lack of enthusiasm for the line the Government were taking. In spite of Eden's announcement of a cessation of hostilities and his praise, amid cheers, of Sir Miles Lampson and Admiral Kelly in bringing

it about, the volume of criticism grew throughout March. Lloyd George, who entered the party fray again after a protracted absence, infused vigour into the thin ranks of the Opposition by describing the Government's Far Eastern policy as 'feebleness and poltroonery'. This in its turn inspired Eden to retaliate with equal gusto. At Kenilworth he talked about the inconsistencies of pugnacious pacifists. While in the House, replying to an important debate in which the surprisingly strong pro-Japanese sentiment of the back-bench Tories made itself felt, he stressed that in his judgment a man was no less a jingo if he made Pacifism the pretext for his jingoism. To those who suggested that the Government perhaps should have shown itself just a little more vigorous he stressed the danger that we might have found ourselves acting alone, and 'isolated action at a time like this would not only have been unwise and ineffective but would actually have broken up the principles of collective action.' Whether Eden's interpretation is right or wrong in terms of what was possible, it is clear that by our firm resolve to do nothing and to do it decorously the psychological opportunity had slipped by and third-party judgment was to be put in cold storage for a generation.

Two other issues loomed large to a perplexed world at the beginning of 1932—Disarmament and Reparations. Both by the end of the year were seen for what they were, will o' the wisps leading the nation on into realms of violence and despair. We have called January 9—the date of the British *communiqué* on Japan—a fatal day; it also marks the occasion of the statement from Dr. Bruening, the German Chancellor, that it would be impossible for Germany to continue political payments. It was Eden who had to report that no immediate advance agreement could be reached. The attitude of the Laval Government in France was immovably hostile. The British Government, as Neville Chamberlain frankly stated in the House, believed the only way out was a complete cancellation, but what he did not say was that every-

thing depended on when that cancellation took place. The postponement of the Lausanne Conference was yet another nail in the coffin of the last democratic Chancellor of the German Reich. Every diplomatic failure of Bruening was demagogic ammunition in the astonishing assault that Adolf Hitler's National Socialists were making upon the German electorate. Once again Eden bore patient witness in the House to an opportunity that had been lost by the time a settlement had been reached.

On the ill-fated Disarmament Conference he had more to do. He had always spoken well on this subject. After one particularly impressive effort a Labour Member, who had the task of following him, so far forgot himself as to declare that 'the contributions of the honourable and gallant Member for Leamington are always welcome and he is not included in the strictures which are sometimes passed from this side of the House as to the sincerity or feeling which is brought to these discussions.' If at the beginning of 1932 Reparations were a disappointment, hopes for Disarmament ran high. The handsome young Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, whose photographs were finding a place in women's magazines, was, it seems, to be identified with Disarmament from the start. On January 14, the Lord Mayor of London had convened a special meeting of lord mayors and mayors of England and Wales together with provosts from Scottish burghs in order to emphasize the public importance of the forthcoming conference. Sir John Simon was due to address the meeting, but was unable to be there, and sent a letter which held out no spectacular hopes and saw the Disarmament Conference merely as the first of a regular series. Eden took his place as the principal speaker, and on the whole sent the dignitaries away with a rather more inspiring vision than Sir John had offered.

The British delegation, he said, could enter the conference with a clear conscience. Successive British Governments had constantly striven to set an example. For five years almost

alone among the Great Powers we had not increased our armaments. Our Army was little more than a police force; our Navy had been successively reduced; while we were only fifth in the race for the biggest air arm. We could make no further contribution to unilateral disarmament. We did not have to. Students who in future years take Disarmament for their special subject will learn in detail of the vanity of human wishes as interpreted by Governments.

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The Disarmament Conference began its deliberations on February 2 and so coincided to the day with the Japanese bombardment of Shanghai, described as the heaviest artillery action since 1918. Germany and Russia abstained from the proceedings; Germany, because she could not get equality of status, and the Russians, more bluntly, because they could not get Disarmament on to the agenda. Both Governments claimed the right to put forward their own proposals apart from the 1930 Convention, which was the basis of the Conference's work. Other and lesser States one by one followed their example. For weeks the Conference sat and listened to an endless sequence of schemes from delegates, great and small. Proposals were too numerous to be co-ordinated or digested. From February 28 to the Easter adjournment on March 19, the Conference was described as being in a state of 'suspended animation'. There was a flickering sign of life in the dim existence of a Technical Commission. On April 11, the American delegate startled his colleagues by submitting a resolution that provided for qualitative as well as quantitative disarmament, though what constituted a specifically aggressive weapon was left to the hollow men on the Technical Commission. Having cancelled out their decision by means of this reservation, the Conference is now described as 'relapsing into committee work' in which moribund condition it remained from the middle of April to the

end of June. No rally was recorded and hope was steadily abandoned. For learned and fatuous discussion nothing had been seen like it since the devout doctors of the Middle Ages.

America, badly in need of arms reduction in terms of the merest business interest, tried to link the proceedings to the Lausanne Conference by means of some quiet blackmail—no reduction of arms from Europe, no cancellation of debts from America. This was followed up with President Hoover's famous proposal for a reduction of arms by one-third all round. Great Britain once again played for time, and in doing so lost whatever opportunity there was in this offer. Italy accepted it without reservation, France was unfavourable and Japan turned it down. It is arguable that a clear acceptance by us in principle at once might have galvanized the Conference into constructive action. But by the middle of July the Hoover plan was, for the purposes of practical politics, dead. The Conference merely used it as a pretext to terminate the first part of its work forthwith. On July 20 Sir John Simon, his legal faculty in full play, presented a Draft Resolution which set out in full all the points on which all the Governments were in approximate agreement. These were so few as to exceed the worst fears of the weary delegates. Although the Resolution was in no way a policy it was adopted; Russia and Germany voted against it, and Germany withdrew from the Conference until such time as her status should come up for consideration.

The autumn was devoted to a Franco-German dispute, with Mussolini accepting in the *Sunday Times* Germany's equality thesis, and Sir John Simon warning Berlin not to repudiate the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty. The situation hardened into deadlock. An attempt to invoke a Four-Power Pact came to nothing; nobody could agree where to meet. Herriot saw MacDonald, and Mussolini made speeches, but with the steady deterioration of events in the Far East, the diplomatic inanity and intransigence of Europe

became so unbearable that some Government had to make a move. It came from the Quai d'Orsay—it covered all the ground. As a contribution to peace the French Plan was both logical and extravagant, but it had the effect of rousing Sir John Simon to produce counter-proposals, and the year ended on a note of hope that at least there was some material for further discussion.

Eden had only been allowed to play a relatively modest part in Great Britain's tortuous policy. He hurried between Geneva and Westminster, now examining ratios at the Conference, now explaining to the League Council why Great Britain would have to reduce her subscription, now telling Parliament that he had nothing further to say about the Hoover Plan. The decision to reduce our payments to the League which Eden announced to the Council early in May caused a temporary sensation. It was suggested that it implied a rather more extensive default, but Eden was able to give sufficient assurance to stamp out that particular crisis almost as soon as it had flared up. In October it was his dismal duty to report to the Cabinet that the Disarmament Conference was damnably near death. How strangely he worded his memorandum we can only surmise, but there are grounds for believing that Eden was not impressed with the view that failure was inevitable. The very complexity of the issues raised by the Disarmament Conference may well have given a new stimulus to his undoubted flair for administrative detail. Cecil was in Geneva most of the time: he had been the one connecting link between the Socialist and National Governments, and during the interregnum the *de facto* British Foreign Secretary. Then there was the British delegation to the Disarmament Conference, which was representative and influential.

Eden was surrounded by able men and women to press upon him the urgency of the issues at stake, the possibilities of making the Geneva machine work. He was susceptible to international influences from which the Cabinet was

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immune. Eden did his best to keep the Cabinet fully informed, and on occasions submitted memoranda which included his personal recommendations on matters of policy. Simon allowed them to filter through for discussion without adding any comments of his own—a shrug of the shoulder, no doubt, conveying his opinion of his young colleague with far greater eloquence than the most polished word of mouth.

Chapter XIII



PROGRESS IN LOST CAUSES

IN order to show to the world that Disarmament had our 'earnest consideration', the British Government opened its 1933 account with almost an excess of zeal. It submitted an ambitious 'programme of work', which it suggested should be taken up as soon as the Conference had eliminated the French plan. Like the French plan it was more grandiose in language than significant in meaning, and offered substantial hope only in as far as it suggested some revision of Part V of the Versailles Treaty, which was concerned with German disarmament. But the French plan had to be discussed first, and on February 3 Eden made an important statement on the theme of that eternal challenge to European settlement and peaceful change—French security.

France was wanting new securities. Eden asked pertinently whether in the search for them the French might not fall into the trap of forgetting existing guarantees. To reiterate a guarantee was not necessarily to strengthen it. In the eyes of the British Government the guarantees already covering France were 'real and substantial'. Locarno, in Eden's view, had marked the close of the chapter of the immediate post-war period in Europe and had opened a new one, as yet unfinished. Eden asked that the example of Locarno should be followed—we had signed in the hope that it would be—and that other nations would settle their regional difficulties in the same way. But as far as Great Britain was concerned, in our League membership and in our Locarno signature, we had gone as far as we could go in assuming definite commitments in Europe. He ended by offering no encouragement that Great Britain could modify this attitude. To any new obligations the British people were 'unalterably

opposed'. Although this statement was meant to be cold comfort, the Geneva statesmen were not unduly discouraged; indeed, they were rather pleased with Great Britain's new spokesman, and on this self-same day were able to do him a good turn.

For February 3 saw a temporary arrangement reached in what had been a rather serious Anglo-Persian oil dispute. In the previous November the Persian Government had peremptorily cancelled the concession held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. This action automatically affected the British Government, which was the principal shareholder in the Company. Eden with his intimate knowledge of Persian ways and means must have been well aware of the sinister interaction of oil and politics in the Near East. This he saw as an occasion for stern language and firm action. In his capacity as Under-Secretary to a National Government he told the House of Commons that we would not tolerate any damage to the Company's interests or interference with their premises or business activities in Persia. On December 8 he read out a lengthy and acrimonious correspondence that had passed between Whitehall and Teheran; ill-concealed ultimatums were bandied to and fro.

Legally, Persian action was indefensible. The D'Arcy Concession, under the terms of which Anglo-Persian subsequently operated, was granted in 1901 for a period of sixty years and contained no provisions for cancellation. As the Persians would not withdraw we threatened to refer the matter to The Hague Court, but the Persians refused to recognize its jurisdiction in this instance. Britain accordingly took the dispute to the League. Up to this moment the affair was a good example of national sovereignty and capitalist imperialism ruthlessly disregarding the principles of arbitration: immediately the League was invoked Anglo-Persian oil was in the hands of men expert in the arts of camouflaging third-party judgment.

There had grown up at Geneva a League within a League,

The smaller States recognized that the only security for them in the bleak post-war world was to make collective security look attractive to the Great Powers. Their Governments thus made persistent efforts to guide the representatives of the Great Powers into the paths of arbitration, and the initiative in League policy tended to pass from the stars to the small-part actors. Add to this the undoubted fact that the small-part actors were during the first fifteen years of the League's life incomparably the ablest men—and you have a rough explanation of the settlement of the Anglo-Persian oil dispute. Great Britain was not prepared to push it to the point of war and scope was therefore left for skilful and impartial negotiation behind the scenes.

M. Benes it was who on this occasion worked out the technical details. All proceedings were to be suspended until the Council met in May, and even then there was an option to prolong the suspension. The Company was to negotiate at once a new concession from the Persian Government and in the meanwhile was to operate as before.

Although Eden did not have much to do save to bring home the fruits of victory by compromise, this minor crisis identified him with success in League circles and encouraged the growth of what almost amounted to a small Eden Committee, who seeing him as the coming man and not particularly encouraged by Simon's sang-froid, resolved to train him in the arts of international righteousness. In addition to Benes there were among this unofficial group of advisers the subtle Madariaga of Spain, the suave Politis of Greece, and the flamboyant Titulescu of Rumania. It is to no small extent due to these men that Eden alone emerged from the wreck of Disarmament and the spread of Fascism with his prestige enhanced and with a reputation for making Geneva a powerful instrument for Peace and Justice.

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But the men in charge of Disarmament during 1935 were looking after a lost cause. Hindenburg by abandoning Bruening in his hour of need for the deplorable von Papen had let the wooden horse in to the Wilhelmstrasse. By March 1933 the intrigues of Schleicher and of Papen were blown away like dry leaves before the hurricane of the Nazi advance. Hitler was Chancellor and the torches of his storm-troopers in endless night procession were new symbols of the terrible old doctrines of blood and fire. Even Geneva had to respond to the demands of strength. During February Japan was declared in solemn conclave to be the aggressor in Manchuria. How could the declaration be brought to life?

For a moment Great Britain was prepared to act alone. Having tried without success to reach international agreement over the export of arms to the Far East the British Government decided to impose an embargo on its own initiative. Simon put it forward more as a moral gesture than for any practical effect it might have. But it was strength only in appearances. Geneva saw it as a move strangely incompatible with our League obligations; Japan was the aggressor, the ban should apply to Japan only. The British Government, however, was aware only that no one followed its example, and at the end of March decided to abandon the embargo and substitute for it 'vigorous conversations'.

Disarmament continued to be the issue which caused the greatest disillusionment in this country; the vacillations of Geneva were regarded with greater dismay by the British electorate than the bombings of Shanghai. When on February 9 the Conference discussed the agenda for the coming year and once again attempted to allot functions between the Bureau, the Political Commission, the Committee of Effectives and the various other of its subsections, Eden pressed strongly for quick action. The time for decision had come. Nearly all the proposals before the Conference had been examined in their technical implications to the point

of distraction. It was for the Government now to shoulder their responsibilities.

In a passage of great power and of more than usually felicitous expression, which was to be the burden of the British plea for the rest of the year, he urged the delegates to weigh the risks of making concessions in order to promote agreement, against the infinitely greater risk of allowing the Conference to break down. Everyone agreed in principle; the Conference had got into the vicious habit of referring the vital problems from one committee to another; that must not be repeated: the British proposal was that powers of decision should be vested in the Bureau but here, as on so many other occasions, the smaller states saw this as a move to undermine their influence, and France relying on the smaller States for reinsurance in Eastern Europe was once again at their side. Bickerings and dissensions were in the ascendancy.

Then on February 20 the Air Commission met in a futile effort to abolish the barbarity of bombing from the air, and Lord Londonderry made his historic speech that Great Britain needed to protect lives and property in certain 'outlying districts.' 'The world is round', the Turkish delegate remarked, 'what is an outlying district?' Lord Londonderry stoutly maintained in the House of Lords the value of the services he had rendered to the State by this particular reservation. Lord Londonderry's attitude on this question seriously undermined the confidence of the Powers in the general sincerity of Great Britain's intentions. Eden himself did not wholly escape the odium. The feeling in favour of the ultimate total abolition of military aircraft, with the immediate abolition of air bombing as a starting point, gained ground with the passing of the months.

In May, Eden was forced to reiterate that the British Government felt obliged to maintain the hated reservation. They regretted the necessity but took comfort from the support they received from the 'Iraq Government, who found the



TRUMVIRS IN DOWNING STREET

Sir Samuel Hoare as First Lord of the Admiralty ; Eden as Sir Samuel's successor at the Foreign Office ; and Sir Robert Vansittart, then Permanent Under-Secretary and Principal Advisor. This triumvirate broke up with the rejection of the Hoare-Laval Plan.

right similarly impossible to relinquish. Eden had the backing also of the Persian and Siamese delegates; all the rest, including the American and French, were against him. In England there was furore, and controversy waxed strong on non-party lines. Baldwin, backed by the majority of the Cabinet, would not budge. At the end of May he asserted that the Government saw no reason to change a policy deliberately arrived at—simply because objection was taken to it. As far as the Cabinet is concerned Sir John Simon is reputed, to his lasting credit, to have belonged to the small minority who advocated a dignified withdrawal.

Throughout June protests poured into Whitehall which by about July showed signs of having had some effect, for we find Eden at Geneva confessing that if the question of air bombing threatened to wreck the attainment of a disarmament convention then 'a very different situation would have arisen'. A 'situation' with a diplomatic 'difference' in it is not what it seems to be. The situation to which Eden referred was the very one which had caused all the misgiving!

In this atmosphere Disarmament was stifled, but not before a supreme effort had been made by Great Britain to give the old objectives a new urgency. Eden had had to struggle on as the Government's principal representative at the Conference—the only senior minister to supplement his activity had been Londonderry, and his one contribution had been a positive hindrance to Eden in his already superhuman task. On March 1 he came back to England and reported to the Cabinet. The comments he had to make were trenchant and disquieting. The position of the Conference he described as being critical.

After earnest consideration the Cabinet decided to reinforce Eden's efforts by sending over both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. On the 16th of March,

MacDonald produced the famous Draft Convention from an oration of overwhelming Celtic passion and prolixity. This he followed up by a lightning visit to Rome and laid before Mussolini the first of the panic pacts—the Four-Power Pact, which, apart from the purposes of general collaboration, stressed revision of the Peace Treaties. MacDonald is reported to have found in the Duce's ideas 'a wonderful affinity' to his own.

MacDonald, like Haldane in pre-war days, had a habit of wrapping himself round in superfluous mystery. As he would not encourage true reports, false and startling rumours were allowed to spread. It was notorious that efforts had been made to bring Hitler and Mussolini to Geneva, but Hitler had refused on the good grounds that he had only just a few days before become a Government and needed a little time to consolidate; as for Mussolini, it was necessary for the Scottish mountain to go to the new Mahomet. What had Great Britain achieved? Had we become entangled in an eternal European intrigue, or made a considered contribution to European appeasement?

On the 24th of March MacDonald made a bewildering statement in the House, the length of which was second only to its obscurity, but in principle it appeared that Mussolini had handed over a document containing his thoughts on the best way to achieve peace between the four Western Powers. It was to be done by means of a pact to last ten years which was to be concluded 'within the framework' of the League. The moribund Article XIX of the Covenant (with its revision clauses) was to be reinstalled. MacDonald was not asked to take it or leave it—simply to think it over. This he did, and put forward his view that, provided the special interests of the smaller Powers were adequately guarded, the Italian Plan was too big an opportunity to miss. He would not care to incur the responsibility of setting it aside. On the whole there was a favourable response to MacDonald's meanderings, except from Winston Churchill.

PROGRESS IN LOST CAUSES

Churchill was the most notable absentee from the National Government; Baldwin had apparently decided when the parties had made their selection that if peace and conciliation were to be the watchwords of our policy, Winston was potentially more dangerous in office than out of it. This may or may not have been a sound estimate, but the Churchill trumpet, which might have been silenced with a Cabinet mute, now brayed defiance from the back benches. The battle-cries were India and Arms, and with tremendous and consistent invective Churchill soon became the Government's most formidable rebel.

On this occasion he denounced disarmament conferences which in his view actually did more harm than good, and asked the House to realize that military preponderance was the Empire's sure foundation. The revolution in Germany that was accompanying his words he cited as reinforcing his thesis. The principal effect of MacDonald's intervention in foreign affairs during the past four years had been to bring Great Britain nearer to war than ever before. Let him pay proper attention to urgent domestic tasks and leave foreign affairs to competent ambassadors and accepted diplomatic channels.

This brought Eden to his feet to make a very brilliant counter-attack. For Mr. Churchill to assert that the Prime Minister had been responsible for the deterioration in international relations during the past four years was a 'mischievous absurdity.' It was an assertion all the more regrettable, in that it might obtain abroad a measure of authority which the House did not give it. He went on to show how the pre-war diplomacy was not a particularly good precedent for the successful conduct of international relations: it had led inexorably to the experience of 1914, which the Government to-day were doing all in their power to avoid. In the great attempt surely it was worth while to give a new method a trial. The Government was not expecting success at once but 'any gospel is better than a gospel of despair.' Mr.

Churchill's thesis had been that it was vital to bring France and Germany closer together; what better step could be taken to this end than the Prime Minister's pilgrimage to Rome?

It is reported that Eden's championship of his chief was warmly applauded by the House, even if members left the debate somewhat mystified by the Pact. Indeed from a Parliamentary and Governmental point of view Eden emerged with far more prestige and popularity than MacDonald and Simon, who had had the responsibilities of negotiation.

Simon, however, managed to collect some popularity from his extremely heavy handling of the notorious Moscow trial of the Metro-Vickers employees. It was the occasion for one of those unpleasant outbursts of hysterics and phobias that periodically afflict the British public. Simon exploited the power of our purse in order to override the apparently barbaric dictates of Soviet justice. The connexion between the two might not seem to be direct but in the circumstances we could not stand upon polite inquiries, and Sir John knew no other way of obtaining for the prisoners a fair trial. Cheers greeted Eden when on the 20th of March he solemnly announced that in view of the treatment to which British subjects were liable in Russia, the Government had decided to suspend negotiations with the Soviet for a new commercial treaty. Thus were High Protectionists and White Russians to experience the thrill of Sir John Simon's capacity to decide when the *Jus Britannica* was threatened with violation. There was nothing like it since Jenkin's Ear.

April was a month of gestures and denunciations. MacDonald went to stay with Roosevelt, while Sir Austen Chamberlain, exercising to the full the prerogatives of an elder statesman, attacked the upstart Hitler—leader of a 'Government which embodied the worst of All-Prussian Imperialism.' Chamberlain's influence over Eden did not end when he ceased to be Foreign Secretary; indeed, without the trammels of office the range of his authority widened. He spoke as an adviser beyond the reach of formal rebuke.

PROGRESS IN LOST CAUSES

The rich magic of his voice weaved a more potent spell. Disarmament, he declared, meant peace only with a Germany which had learnt not merely how to live herself, but also to let others live inside her and beside her. It was Sir Austen who at this time upheld the good faith of America against niggardly critics; Sir Austen who helped by restrained criticism to provide Eden and the Government with a way out of the aerial bombing impasse.

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In June the Four-Power Pact was signed, but it was still-born. Its terms of reference were so modified as to lack substantive meaning. It had all been signed before. It merely coincided with intense diplomatic activity in Geneva during the summer and autumn culminating in Germany's dramatic withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and the League. The conclusion was inevitable; no pact or patchwork of tentative arbitration could resist the momentum of the new Germany. European diplomacy from henceforth turned upon the recognition that Germany was once again a Great Power in the making.

Throughout the summer Eden was engaged in discussion with the shrewd French Premier Daladier. They were searching for a policy of appeasement, the discovery of which was to coincide with its defeat. Precious months were wasted. In June Eden and Londonderry for Great Britain, Norman Davis for America, were trying to get Daladier to delete 'offensive weapons'. But Daladier wanted to know too much about the proposals for controlling German arms manufacture. His counter inquiries brought no response, and French security remained bound up with the *status quo*.

In the summer Arthur Henderson, who had struggled so valiantly for Disarmament and was undoubtedly successful in giving the Conference a modicum of dignity and prestige, went on his Disarmament pilgrimage; but although everyone

wished him well he was regarded as going beyond his terms of reference if he suggested that some of the statesmen interested should get together and work out a joint plan. Hitler was not yet ready to meet Daladier, Daladier was offended at the suggestion that he should meet Hitler. In September Eden and Davis and Daladier were again engaged in exchange of views in Paris, only this time the talks were not tripartite but in compartments, Franco-American, Anglo-French, Anglo-American. Henderson was in Paris too, but nothing had happened which made it worth while asking him to join in the discussions. He was left to keep in touch with the negotiations as best he could.

By October the general situation was critical. Nazi pressure on Austria was increasing; it was known that Germany was in fact rearming on a substantial scale. France was diplomatically impregnable but Eden was able to make some progress with the negotiations, for he was in a position to indicate a more favourable reaction in Downing Street to French ideas on security. Eden would not, however, go so far as to allow a preliminary examination of German armaments before signing the Convention, or the application of sanctions if a breach of the Convention was proved, both of which provisos France was supposed to want, and which it was rumoured at the time were hotly debated; but on the general questions of supervision and a probationary period Daladier found Eden amenable. Daladier for his part was ready to admit a substantial arms reduction if after the probationary period the supervision had proved satisfactory and to allow that the precise figures of that reduction should actually appear in the terms of the Convention. The talks were important too as indirectly helping to improve Franco-Italian relations, which ever since the Naval Treaty negotiations of 1930 had been steadily deteriorating.

So by the time the League Assembly opened there was general agreement between France, Italy, Great Britain and the United States on how disarmament should be carried out.

PROGRESS IN LOST CAUSES

As far as Germany was concerned it meant another delay in her access to equality of status. At first it looked as though the Germans were anxious to go a long way to get agreement. There were informal but intense negotiations between Paul Boncour, Simon, Eden, Suvich and Davis on the one hand, and between these 'allies' and Neurath and Goebbels on the other; but it soon became evident that real progress was not possible. Nothing that the 'allies' offered was sufficient to compensate Goebbels for the possible loss of his anti-Versailles propaganda. Italy began significantly enough to act as mediator, recognizing Germany's moral right to any arms which the other Powers decided to keep for themselves.

By September 29 there was deadlock. Simon and Eden and the other principal delegates left Geneva, all solemnly referring themselves back to their respective capitals for further instructions. What did the Germans mean by 'samples'? Nobody knew, and Germany would not tell. At the beginning of October Baldwin tried to put things right by addressing through the Conservative Conference a solemn warning to the world that the consequences of the failure to achieve Disarmament would mean ruin to European civilization. But the atmosphere was poisoned. Events were forcing France and Great Britain into closer collaboration.

In July the German War Minister had asked permission to buy twenty-five aeroplanes from us; the request brought a brusque refusal and an added interest in France's allegations about German rearmament. Britain and France together were forced to protest about the German attitude to foreign shipping countries.

Simon was discouraged. Had he not argued that the Disarmament Conference should be continued without postponement? Had he not used all his influence to keep its

headquarters at Geneva? On October 14 he went to the Conference, and in cold precise terms accused Germany of having shifted her course in the preceding weeks. There was immense indignation in Berlin, and before there was time to turn round the news flashed across the world that Germany had left the Disarmament Conference and followed up this drastic action by giving notice of her resignation from membership of the League of Nations. Hitler had struck the first of his blows at the Europe of Versailles.

It was the gravest news bulletin that the wireless had ever carried, but the British people as a whole took it calmly. Indeed there was very early on a sneaking sympathy for Germany, and Simon was soon the object of widespread criticism for having needlessly led Hitler on into these perilous paths. He replied to his critics in a broadcast speech. Germany had asked for samples of the weapons denied her, but had on request refused to specify her demand and had, instead, put in a general claim for rearmament. That was the real difference between the German and the other Governments; and neither this nor anything he had said about German policy could, he believed, be the real cause of Germany's withdrawal from the Conference and the League.

But over and above Sir John's personal controversies was the question of future policy. What was our attitude to be to Germany from now onwards? We all agreed to condemn her action. To Henderson it was 'premature and unfortunate', to Neville Chamberlain 'hasty and ill-advised'—but that was not enough, the Cabinet resolved that the door should be left ajar. Germany was free to resume Disarmament discussions whenever she saw fit. The Prime Minister informed Hitler that he accepted the words Hitler had used in favour of peace on their face value. This attitude, however, failed to take the sting out of the Opposition. Their attitude was to stress the seriousness of the general situation and relate it to the Government's lack of policy and in particular to the feebleness and cynicism of the Foreign Secretary. Germany

was merely an instance, the Opposition did not bother itself to look for any other definite proofs; but their hazy approach that something was rotten in the heart of the Cabinet and Foreign Office, met with startling response. A by-election fought on foreign policy at East Fulham saw a Conservative majority of 14,500 turned into a Labour majority of 4,800. Labour also won in the municipal elections throughout the country. The cry was that the Government were war-mongers, and the public, it seemed, agreed.

What was Eden's attitude? There is no doubt that this, the first of the German crises, was a serious blow at the prestige of his chief. His experiences at Geneva cannot have led him to believe in the prospects of a genuine settlement with the Nazis. He had felt the full force of Goebbels.

The little Nuremberg lawyer is in many ways the ablest of the German leaders. His powers of organization based on his understanding of mass psychology make him one of the most formidable of contemporary leaders. It is only fair to emphasize that he has learnt nearly all he knows about propaganda from Hitler himself, but by 1933 his hands were on most of the controls. Now Goebbels has always regarded foreign affairs as an instrument to forge domestic unity, and accordingly the phobias he has encouraged are, in terms of diplomacy, extremely violent; and like Hitler he seems to have the capacity to believe in the fictions he creates. To Eden this man must have been the personification of all that was most extreme and irresponsible in National Socialism. The Opposition might gain points for a while, but how does one arbitrate with Goebbels when Goebbels by every act and statement rejects arbitration as a principle of State policy?

These considerations must have been at the back of Eden's mind when in a by-election speech at Skipton he made a brilliant effort to stem the tide of public feeling that was rising against the Government. The Labour Party he attacked for indulging in a hysterical exaggeration of an admittedly grave international situation, and for trying to make party

capital out of a deep and sincere anxiety shared by all alike to maintain the peace of the world. 'However much we may deplore Germany's action this is no occasion,' he said, 'for alarmist language, still less for the scaremongering which has been indulged in in certain quarters during the last few weeks.' The situation could assuredly be redeemed, but to do so they must keep their heads and their engagements. A campaign was being fostered, principally by Lord Beaverbrook, against Locarno, but Locarno was still 'one of the most effective instruments for Peace in Europe.' No doubt this passage was for German consumption; at least it showed a ready understanding of the direction in which Germany was heading. Eden developed the point. No British Government was 'blindly fettered' to Locarno, but it meant certain precise obligations. 'Some people seem to imagine', he added, 'that if they were furnished with some means of escape from what they are pleased to call the commitments of Locarno they would then be less likely to be involved in a European war; but the very opposite is, of course, the truth.' We could not avoid another war simply by saying that in no circumstances would we go to the aid of a power unjustly attacked. Great Britain is a Great Power with the responsibilities of a Great Power and if we fail to discharge them we will invite the disaster which will follow.

As for Disarmament, he spoke from personal experience; it was idle to contend that the National Government were not wholehearted in their support for the cause; no delegation had worked harder than the British in its effort to reconcile the claims of German equality with those of French security. It was no fault of ours that our efforts had not been successful. Certainly Germany's departure must cause 'some dislocation' of the Conference's work, but the British Government were determined that the work should go on.

Simon defended himself somewhat more laboriously in Parliament when he opened a full-dress debate on Disarmament. It was largely a historical survey, and he managed

to water down the obligations of Locarno. There were four in all, and three were dependent upon the unanimous verdict of the League Council. Our contribution, however, was neither through isolation nor alliances but through staunch support of the League and its machinery.

The general tone of Simon's statement left the House very dissatisfied, and after some lively exchanges between Austen Chamberlain, who once again expressed the gravest doubts of Germany's good faith, and Lloyd George, who thought Germany was the injured party, it was left to Eden to extract again what little credit was due to the Government. He reiterated the arguments he had used at Skipton and boldly stated that he still maintained that if the nations had accepted the British Draft Convention they would have realized by far the greatest measure of agreed disarmament that the world had ever attempted. The Government still stood by it in principle, and if there were any who wished to criticize it, let them try to avoid making peace the shuttle-cock of party.

Chapter XIV



LORD PRIVY SEAL AT LARGE

EDEN's many-sided activities not only underlined his competence but also seemed to identify him with progressive forces in international relations. Thus we find his reply to a Liberal motion in the Commons for an international police force sympathetic in tone and moderate in judgment. New Commonwealth opinion must have been agreeably surprised. It was Eden who was the British Government's spokesman in opposing Japan's claims to Naval Parity; Eden who was grappling with the tiresome details of the Leticia dispute—one of those endemic frontier wrangles that have undermined the political life of South America. These efforts must have brought his name increasingly before the High Priests of the League of Nations Union.

At all events the Cabinet and Mr. Baldwin were quick to assess the potentialities of the handsome young Under-Secretary; and January the 1st, 1934, found Eden the recipient of a formidable New Year Honour. He was promoted to the free-lance post of Lord Privy Seal—one of two offices which Baldwin had kept warm by reserving it to himself and which could accordingly be presented to anyone and converted to any use. *The Times* Parliamentary correspondent noted that 'the appointment was received with approval by all sections of the House. He has made no enemies and many friends.' The truth is that his work at Geneva had brought him an immense personal prestige in Parliament. *The Times* had actually forecast his promotion on December the 14th, and in official circles the news came as no surprise. In fact the only surprise was that Eden's new post did not bring with it Cabinet rank; it was not realized perhaps that this was more than the ambitious and retentive Simon would allow. Lord

LORD PRIVY SEAL AT LARGE

Stanhope succeeded Eden as Under-Secretary, and so a request was met that Foreign Affairs should have some official representation in the Lords.

The *Manchester Guardian* at once interpreted the object of Eden's appointment as being 'to strengthen the political representation of the Foreign Office' and pointed out that he would still be under Sir John Simon's jurisdiction and that his duties would from henceforth have a special reference to League of Nations questions. *The Times* correspondent in Berlin reported that the appointment had aroused considerable interest there. 'It is taken as a sign that Great Britain is determined to support the League of Nations and to bring disarmament negotiations back to Geneva as soon as possible.'

The very vagueness of his office gave Eden new initiative and a real status in European diplomacy. Goebbels' newspaper *Angriff* was quick to detect the personal meaning of the appointment. 'From the German point of view it may be expected that in all European questions Mr. Eden will adopt a more determined standpoint than many of his predecessors. After all, he belongs to a generation whose life and conceptions have been formed and moulded by the War. This fact increases the significance of his appointment on the eve of very important political discussions.' Goebbels knew his man and was alive to the shape of things to come.

If the appointment brought no instantaneous reaction from the British public, within three months they were to be introduced to yet another national celebrity. It is tempting to see the appointment as an essential part of Baldwin's double-minded attitude to Foreign Affairs. He admired Eden and Eden had proved his worth, but he may well have felt that Simon was a more effective instrument of national unity on the home than on the foreign front, that the claims of France and Germany provoked alternative attitudes, and that if democracy was to work under a National Government those alternatives would have to be adequately represented.

There was everything to be said for a young and able Conservative to undertake the task. Then finally there was the pressure from the Foreign Office itself. The permanent staff was none too happy about Sir John. He was at once too subservient in the big decisions, too dictatorial in the small ones. The most powerful department in the Civil Service was not in full harmony with its chief. The formidable Sir Robert Vansittart was complaining of meagre results. Eden as Lord Privy Seal was the compelling reply to all these demands.

At the beginning of January Simon returned to report to the informal Disarmament Committee of the Cabinet on conversations he had had with Mussolini and with the French Government. Mussolini had been rather more accommodating than was expected and was prepared to put the solution of Disarmament before League Reform, and the decision reached was 'No Change'. Let Disarmament simmer by means of 'parallel and supplementary' negotiations.

When the Council met Sir John had, accordingly, nothing to say to it. Then came a German note to France reiterating her minimum demands—a short service army of 300,000 men and adequate 'defensive' weapons. These went far beyond our Draft Convention and it was clear that France would reject them out of hand. The Government came to the conclusion that a new declaration of British policy was urgently needed, and so it produced a Memorandum with its revised views on Disarmament.¹

This Memorandum was subtle in its compromise, and had all the appearance of statesmanship, but it was nine months too late for Germany. It began with a frank warning, arms of a kind permitted to one State could not be indefinitely denied to another. If there was no agreement there would be an armaments race 'the end of which no man could see.' Either the most heavily armed Powers would have to abandon certain weapons or they would have to undertake not to increase their present armaments. The Government 'earnestly

¹ Published as a White Paper on January 31, 1934.

pressed that the first course should be actively pursued.' On this basis the details were worked out. The German army should be limited to 200,000 men, but it should be allowed a twelve months' service. Bigger tanks and bigger guns should be considered.

This Memorandum did not save Disarmament but it made Eden. On February the 6th Sir John Simon explained the Memorandum, and in doing so announced that as a means of turning it to the best account the Lord Privy Seal would as soon as possible visit Paris, Rome, and Berlin in order to explain the British point of view, and to find out by direct contact the reactions of the other Governments to the Memorandum. Simon's explanation did not rouse the House to enthusiasm nor encourage the hope that Eden's explanation would be any more popular. Simon's propositions were that a certain measure of German rearmament should be allowed because her claim to equality of rights could not and ought not to be resisted, and while the immediate abandonment of the Versailles clauses was not practical politics, the provisions for more frequent consultation in the Memorandum would give the Convention greater validity without in any way committing Great Britain in advance.

This particular brand of realism made Eden's task impossible. We were in no way committed, why were we bothering? We were backing our offer with a threat. The most significant passage in Sir John's speech was the warning that if the Memorandum was turned down we should have to look to our defences.

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Eden left for his first grand tour on February the 16th. He was entering a bloodstained infuriated Europe. But a week before, fifteen people had been killed and over two hundred wounded in the Place de la Concorde. The financial scandals associated with the name of Stavisky had caused the downfall of two Governments. Daladier's handling of the situation

had brought France to the verge of anarchy. In this perilous situation the French President had called upon the aged Gaston Doumergue, himself a former President, to provide the semblance of unity for the immediate requirements of law and order. In Austria the pocket Dictator Dollfuss had outraged the opinion of the world by his savage overthrow of the Democratic Republic. For three days and nights howitzers and machine guns, field guns and trench mortars rained their fire of death into the Karl Marx Hof. A conservative estimate of the slaughter between February the 12th and 15th puts the dead at one thousand and the wounded at five thousand. Thus did the Heimwehr maintain its sovereignty. Thus did the virus of Fascism spread to the dreamy city of Vienna. In this atmosphere of hatred, revenge and summary execution, Eden on Disarmament was a voice in the wilderness.

He spent three days in Paris, but the tension was not sufficiently relaxed to admit of a detailed exchange of view with the responsible Ministers; M. Léger was available, and M. Léger equals Vansittart multiplied by ten. The constant changes at the Quai d'Orsay have until recently given this almost omniscient official an incredible authority over French foreign policy.

It was agreed that Eden should return to Paris after his visits to Berlin and Rome, for there were the perils of further disorder in Austria. Germany was watching every move in the situation. What would Berlin's immediate reaction be to the little Austrian Chancellor, who had so disconcertingly taken a leaf out of their book of terrorism? Would Dollfuss turn on the Austrian Nazis or would Hitler strike first? Simon's suggestion that the Great Powers should forgo something of their armaments was naturally not admissible in Paris. The alternative, then, was as *The Times* said in its leader on February 16, that in the attempt 'to break the deadlock the British Government must recognize Germany's right to arms now denied her.' But how could France listen to this when it appeared that her whole social

and political system was in danger from within? Better that Eden should introduce himself to the two supermen first and come back to a calmer Paris with more information at his disposal.

Eden arrived in Berlin on February 20 and there were meetings straight away. First of all Eden, with Sir Eric Phipps, the British Ambassador in Berlin, met Neurath and Blomberg. Neither of these men were Nazis, though both believed from their specialized standpoints—Foreign Office and Army—that National Socialism was an absolute necessity for Germany. Both were sincere in their admiration of the dictatorship and the dictator. All through Neurath proved himself a courteous and rational negotiator. On the other hand it is doubtful whether Phipps was sufficiently in sympathy with German aspirations to differentiate between Neurath and the wilder Party men, and it must have been clear to Eden when the interview with Hitler began that everything was subordinated to the will and temperament of this incalculable man.

It was the first personal contact Hitler had made with an important representative of a Great Power. Eden was thus at this moment an essential factor in Hitler's prestige. But three weeks before, German diplomacy had secured its first great diplomatic success—the ten-year military Pact with Pilsudski's Poland. Rumour—well founded, too—asserted that Pilsudski had given Hitler twenty-four hours to sign that Pact, and that Polish troops had been massed on the German frontier.

But if the young British Ambassador of Peace knew rather more about the circumstances of Hitler's first diplomatic venture than was convenient, he did not allow his knowledge to do anything other than confirm his belief in the sincerity of Hitler's desire for appeasement. Speaking formally and on behalf of his Government, Eden had to put before Hitler two unpalatable proposals: first, that the Germans should have no military aircraft for two years, and

secondly that they should consent to return to Geneva. 'It may also be assumed,' *The Times* adds significantly, 'that they touched further upon the place and value of the German semi-military formations—the S.A. and S.S. . . . in a military organization of the kind contemplated.' Precisely what Hitler's plans for these bodies were in February 1934 is a matter of intense historical and personal interest. Perhaps he was able to offer Eden assurances that Roehm's pretensions were not so formidable as they seemed to be.

Hitler after the purge of June 30 made the astonishing confession that Roehm had been eliminated because 'he banked on my incapacity to decide.' Eden could no doubt tell us whether that particular piece of self-revelation is quite the whole story. Finally Eden had to ask about the proposed ten years' duration of the Disarmament Convention.

The talks were cordial. Hitler liked Eden's good manners. This young English statesman had polish, he was suave but he was keen. He had the essential faculty for success with Hitler; for he could listen quietly and intelligently, supplying him with a new theme whenever his ideas seemed to be running dry. It is impossible to stop Hitler talking; the art is in preventing him from becoming turgid.

The Times reported that 'Mr. Eden and Herr Hitler appear to have got on very well together. They find common ground in their service in the trenches which appeals particularly to the German Chancellor.' On February 20 the impression in Berlin was that the visit had been well worth while. The rumours were that the meetings might be prolonged. They were. On February 21 a diplomatic barrier was broken down when Hitler took lunch at the British Embassy for the first time. Neurath, Hess, and Goebbels were there as well. Yesterday's favourable impressions were maintained.

It was during this lunch that Corporal Hitler and Captain Eden exchanged their war memoirs to the extent

of working out on the back of a menu the location of their sectors on the Somme. They discovered that they were opposite each other. Eden has the menu card, and it is still Exhibit No. 1. The informal nature of the talks was duly stressed, but they were prolonged for another day. On the February 22 Eden had a round of interviews with Neurath, and with those essential gauges of the political pressure, the Ambassadors. He saw the Ambassadors of France, Italy, and the United States. Finally he saw Germany's grand old man—the President, Hindenburg—feeble and resigned to the strange events that surged dimly round him. By August he was dead, and Hitler with a brusque nervousness had consigned him to Valhalla.

The Germans assured Eden that their demands were modest. Their air force requirements were purely defensive. They still wanted a short-term army of 300,000, but were prepared to control the S.A. and S.S. formations and to establish their non-military character. *The Times* gave a hopeful summary of the visit. The problems did not seem quite so hard, Germany's attitude was clearer. The Memorandum would serve as a basis for further discussion. Eden had done well.

On February 25 Eden was in Rome. Once again there was an impressive round of formal festivity, beginning with a dinner party at the British Embassy which the French and German Ambassadors attended, and at which the chief Italian guest was the impassive Baron Aloisi. Eden at Geneva in a mere eighteen months was to encounter him under less favourable auspices. But Aloisi was a professional diplomatist—indignations and felicitations came alike to him.

On the next day at 5 p.m. sharp in the flamboyant reception room at the Palazzo Venezia, Eden had his fatal meeting with Mussolini himself. It lasted one and a half hours, and although its proceedings are wrapped in mystery it has been

from that day to this recorded as a grisly failure. Undoubtedly Eden was meeting Benito Mussolini in one of his most dangerous and subtle moods. A reorientation of policy was at the back of his mind. The addition of Hitler to the already overcrowded list of European dictators was involving the Duce in some fundamental decisions: if Great Britain had any contribution to make to the store of his ideas it was advisable for us to send over a minister of substantive rank, not some petty fledgling whose status did not even allow him access to the Cabinet.

For Mussolini had by now realized that the Nazis had come to stay—and even to expand. If a new Roman Empire was to grow it would have to grow at someone's expense. The obvious victims were Germany in Eastern Europe or Great Britain in the Mediterranean. Should the Duce pit his fragile resources against the New Germany or the Old England? In the light of these gigantic considerations, which from Marshal de Bono's book on the Abyssinian War we now know were occupying him throughout 1934, the presence of Anthony Eden with a tiresome questionnaire on Disarmament was not calculated to take the pout from his lips. Eden, too, was annoyed at the blatant attempt of Italy to hold the balance between France and Germany. That was Great Britain's rôle. But there was something to be said for the view that Italian mediation was more likely to be acceptable to France than ours. Eden perhaps decided to clarify and underline the British Government's objections to the Italian mediation rather than stress its potentialities.

The main result of the talk with which the newspaper men had to juggle was that Eden had decided to leave Rome on the 27th February instead of the 28th. *The Times* did its best to explain away the *détente*, and attributed the brevity of the meeting and visit to their success. It was at pains to confuse the issue by pointing out that Mussolini had 'a more flexible mentality' than the other dictators, but as a tribute to bare fact it was bound

also to report after the interview that Eden 'was entertained at dinner to-night by Signor Suvich instead of Signor Mussolini.' The Duce did not even bother to turn up—a more than usually specious diplomatic illness sufficed to explain his absence. Eden, however, actually did stay over to the 28th, had further talks with the Ambassadors, and dined at the French Embassy. He was also received in private audience by the Pope and had the chance of meeting that master of diplomatic finesse, Cardinal Pacelli.

On March the 1st Eden was back again in Paris, and this time was able to see Doumergue and Barthou, but he was unable to get any satisfactory concession from them. France was still unwilling to admit any rearming of Germany as legal. The Italian scheme, which narrowed the duration of the Convention from ten years to six years, was perhaps a slight improvement on the British Memorandum, but when Eden returned to London and at once saw MacDonald, Simon and Baldwin, there was little for him to report but an occasional anecdote. It would seem that Hitler emerged from the *viva voce* with the top marks, but he alone of the candidates was ineligible for a prize.

On March 14 a discussion on the possibility of securing a Disarmament Convention was again arranged in the Commons expressly to give Eden an opportunity to communicate the impressions he had formed during his tour. He did his best to take a cheerful view of what he admitted to be a very serious situation. What had been borne in on him most of all was the complete failure of the French and German peoples to understand each other's point of view. On the one side there was an 'aggravated impatience', on the other a 'mistrustful apprehension'. Could the gap be bridged, and was there any use in trying to bridge it?

The answer according to Eden was that it was certainly not hopeless to try. As long as there was a glimmer of light they could not admit defeat, but for the present there was little more than a glimmer. Nothing had

happened which caused him to regret the Government's decision to produce the Memorandum and to send him on his explanatory tour. The lesson he had learnt from the three capitals was that there was no alternative to the Memorandum, they offered no substitute that would bring Disarmament in its train. This reply gave satisfaction to nobody save Winston Churchill, who felt that its terms had made it abundantly clear that Disarmament should now be abandoned for the chimera it was.

When the French reply came it was evident that Eden's effort to bridge the gulf had failed. Its tone was stiff and formal, the exaggerated claims of Germany to rearm did not in their view constitute a very good argument for other Powers to disarm. In the opinion of the Quai d'Orsay the British Memorandum was proceeding on the wrong lines, it asked for a reversion to the principles of the Disarmament Conference 'whatever those might be'. But the British Government would not give up all hope, it clung desperately to a French reference to guarantees of execution. What did the French Government mean precisely by guarantees of execution?—and the weary business of Notes began again. A speech by the intransigent M. Barthou was eagerly noted in Whitehall. He had not apparently slammed the door on all German claims.

On April 6 the French Government replied very briefly. It could not define guarantees until it knew more about the British proposals. Barthou was waiting for the Germans to show the mailed fist, which they duly did three days later. Simon's reply to a question in the House quoted a statement from the official *Reichsgesetzblatt* of March 26 which showed considerable increases in the expenditure on all three arms of German defence for the year 1934. The German Ambassador had the excuses ready, the reasons for the increased expenditure were primarily technical. The conversion of the Reichswehr into a short-term army was an expensive job, as was the cost of 'renovat-

ing' the German Navy. It was all as Earthou had prophesied. France's definitive answer to the British inquiries came through at once. It was to the effect that there was now nothing to answer. The German statement made it necessary for France to break off negotiations, the basis of which Germany had 'by its own act destroyed'.

The British Government published this depressing correspondence in the form of a White Paper, adding its own opinion that the British Memorandum of January 29, the *raison d'être* of Eden's tour was still, subject to certain reservations, acceptable to us. But what was to be done?

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During the next few weeks the Disarmament Committee of the Cabinet held a number of anxious and lengthy meetings. The agenda was, first, whether further effort should be made to reconcile France and Germany, and, second, if not, whether immediate steps should be taken to look to our defences. In the absence of a clear declaration of policy, rumour got busy. It was confidently spread about that there was a serious divergence of view between Simon and MacDonald on the first issue; while on the second issue of defence they were supposed to be united as Socialist and Radical against the more militant claims of their Conservative colleagues.

It is not easy to track down the opinions of two such complex and reticent personalities as Ramsay MacDonald and John Simon and to assert that at a given moment there was this or that clear divergence of view between them. Simon was precise and clear-minded—and could hide his meaning at will; MacDonald was verbose and woolly and constitutionally unable to say what he meant. No more than a general inference can be drawn, but perhaps it is fair to summarize their difference as one of the methods by which Germany was to be brought into the comity of nations. Simon had

faith in an Eastern Locarno—French in origin, perhaps, but clever and bristling with legal validity. MacDonald saw it rather for what it was—encirclement, and without knowing of a satisfactory alternative had a deeper insight into the Teutonic mind. Neither of them was young enough to find rapture or salvation in a strong League or full collective security policy.

Their subtleties and ambiguities in the long run merely played into the hands of the Conservatives, who were hoping one day to substitute the fact of armaments for the pretence of policy. But for the immediate future Sir John's views prevailed. In many ways the Conservatives in the Cabinet had a livelier appreciation of the uses of Geneva than these two elderly leaders who were supposed to symbolize the Cabinet's left wing and who were primarily responsible to the League. Thus, for instance, we find Neville Chamberlain as a senior member of the Cabinet consistently backing the men who were prepared to operate the new League system. Eden, it seemed, from a long-term point of view, was likely to strengthen his position whatever policy was adopted.

While the Cabinet was sitting on policy, Mussolini sent over his Foreign Secretary, Suvich, and Hitler his confidant, the ambitious champagne merchant, Joachim Von Ribbentrop. Suvich came first, and so successful was he in reinforcing the Cabinet in its resolve not to join any anti-German *bloc* that Ribbentrop, when he arrived, found most of his work done for him. Suvich's easy success was for Eden something of a rebuff, and it is during the spring of 1934 that Eden first begins to take up a slightly independent and even insubordinate attitude. Thus while Sir John was doing all he could to save Japan from the embarrassing consequences of her aggression, Eden was proclaiming to the Conservative women of Gloucester the need for democracy to unite in defence of its ideals. Japan had implied that her aim was a Protectorate over the whole of China. Sir John's reaction

was a 'friendly inquiry' at Tokyo which reminded the Japanese of solemn obligations and 'assumed' that they did not intend to violate them. The Japanese had replied that this assumption was correct. This bland and cynical attitude involved Sir John in a storm of criticism, but Eden went out of his way to avoid this odium.

The Cabinet's final decision was to do nothing until the Disarmament Conference met again, and when it met to listen but not to initiate. Simon was once again accused of letting disarmament slide and of putting too much trust in the Japanese. Baldwin's reply was 'put your trust in the Government.' But Eden was not so sanguine, and in another address to Conservative women—this time at the Queen's Hall on Disarmament—he freely admitted that his European tour had been a failure. From Geneva he broadcast 'at no time has the outlook been as black as it is now.' To his constituents at Warwick his frank estimate of the European situation was that 'we have in no sense solved the main difficulties.'

Then on July 8 M. Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Secretary, arrived in London with a cure for every ill. Barthou it was who, probably under pressure from Tardieu and the Right Wingers, had signed in April the fatal note which broke off the Disarmament negotiations with Germany, and it was Barthou whom those in the know consistently call the bad man of Europe when the years of lost opportunity are discussed.

Madame Tabouis takes another view. Barthou's refusal to accept a German reserve of 300,000 men in 1934 has not in her opinion had any material effect on the existence of the German army of 2,000,000 to-day. 'All it did was to hasten events and to make Hitler drop his sham pacifism more quickly than he would otherwise have done.'¹

All the same, Barthou's Notes had created a considerable stir in the Chancellories. It had become urgently necessary

¹ *Blackmail or War?* First edition, page 43.

for France to clarify her good faith. So Barthou set out to tour Europe's capitals and meet Europe's statesmen in order that they might know beyond doubt that, as he said to Pilsudski, 'France too has a will of her own', and he gave Sir John Simon a detailed explanation of his plans for an Eastern Locarno. He emphasized that the French Government were acting in strict accord with the Covenant and Locarno; in other words, on the principles of mutual responsibility not directed exclusively against any one Power. France preferred this form of pact to an extension of military alliances. All Barthou asked of Simon was Britain's 'moral support'. Simon liked the idea, and said so in the House of Commons. His statement shows clearly that Barthou had summed up his man and that Simon was being asked to play a rôle which Barthou considered was congenial both to himself and the British Government. He explained that the five 'elements' in the projected pact were Russia, the Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. Barthou's tour had decisive consequences for Eden.

It involved first of all the admission of Soviet Russia into the League of Nations and so into the orbit of capitalist diplomacy. On September 11 Eden was broadcasting from Geneva the hope that Russia's entry to the League would be successfully carried out. A week later, with due solemnity, it was. Only Switzerland, Portugal, and Holland recorded their opposition, but this impression of slight dissent was obliterated not simply by the support of Eden, Barthou, Benes, and Madarariaga who said what was expected of them, but, significantly enough, by Aloisi and Colonel Beck as well.

Chapter XV



MURDER IN MARSEILLES

AFTER putting forward at Geneva some wholesome observations on minority treatment, Eden took the opportunity Barthou's policy provided to visit Sweden and Denmark and explain to those oases of democracy the meaning of the new appeasement.¹ *The Times* announced his visit on September 28, carefully adding that it had 'no special political significance.' On October the 13th it was suitably summing up in a leader the results of his efforts. His 'hard work' was especially praised, and his success was attributed to his method of negotiation. 'Mr. Eden is just the man to appreciate his good fortune, for he, like his hosts, is not solemn, but cheerfully serious when he discusses serious matters.' There were serious matters to discuss, matters not on the agenda.

On the afternoon of October 9, M. Barthou received King Alexander of Yugoslavia at Marseilles. Conversations had been arranged in order to confirm and develop Yugoslavia's participation in the French system and in order to prepare the way for the long awaited *rapprochement* between France and Italy. The royal car had scarcely left Marseilles harbour when a Croat terrorist ran out of the crowd, jumped on the running board, fired at the King, killing him outright, and severely wounding M. Barthou, who died a few hours afterwards. Once again the peace of Europe was in the balance, and months of patient negotiation came to nought.

¹ Eden made a great hit in the Scandinavian countries. They were anxious to claim him as one of their own. *The Times* of October 19th refers to a Mr. Agna Engstroem, a Swedish genealogist, who went so far as to present the Lord Privy Seal with a family tree, "showing that he is descended from Erik IX, King of Sweden, who died in 1160 and was canonized. His descent is traced through Margaret, a daughter of Christian I of Denmark, who married James III of Scotland."

The assassin, Petrys Kalemén, was proved to be the member of a vast terrorist organization. He was in possession of a Czech passport visa'd in Hungary. These facts helped to invest the situation with the utmost international gravity.

Jugoslav-Hungarian friction was of long standing, and had been intensified by the friendly reception given by Hungary to Jugoslav exiles from King Alexander's dictatorship. There had been numerous frontier incidents, and between March 1929 and March 1934 no less than twenty cases of crimes due to Hungary had been alleged by Jugoslavia. Indeed, it was freely asserted in Belgrade that Croat terrorist camps, which included the notorious Janka Puszta farmers, were maintained in Hungary under the patronage of the Hungarian Government. It was from one of these that Kalemén had come. In the spring of 1934 notes had passed between the two Governments, and on the 12th May Hungary had sent a note to the Secretary-General of the League asking the Council to consider these incidents. The two Governments then decided to negotiate direct, the Council adjourned discussion and agreement was reached on July 21st. The Marseilles murder at once opened the wound. Here were all the ingredients of a second Sarajevo.

How was another world war avoided? The general answer is that none of the principal Powers concerned was prepared to exploit the crisis to the last extremity, the particular answer that Eden's personal intervention as *rapporteur* for the League turned the vague underlying desire for peace into a concrete settlement.

The immediate reaction in Jugoslavia was a truce between the various party factions and the setting up of a strong Regency. Both Italy and Hungary were disconcerted by the crime, but from the beginning behaved with extreme correctness. France too was cautious. For behind all the diplomatic pressure Paris and Rome were bound together by a mutual fear of Berlin. Italy climbed down, and in order to avoid any accusation of harbouring Croat terrorists, left Hungary

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to face Jugoslavian threats alone in the League Council. Actually Italo-Jugoslav relations, which had been deplorable ever since the War, began to improve during 1933, and at the beginning of January 1934 a commercial treaty between the two nations had actually been signed. But then the old suspicions began to develop again.

The effect of the assassination was to bring both countries to their senses. Italian wireless propaganda was silenced and diplomatic protests quickly dropped. Perhaps Mussolini had a guilty conscience, for the Yugoslav Government had claimed more than once to have clear evidence of the Italian Government harbouring Yugoslav terrorists. France and Italy apparently came to a secret understanding that France should exercise her influence to prevent Yugoslavia implicating Italy and to concentrate on Hungary only. In return Italy would do nothing to support Hungary in the League. Yugoslavia was to be told that she could not look for French military support.

There is, then, a case for claiming that before the League took it over, the situation had virtually been settled. But a Balkan fracas is not too easily dispatched, and on the 19th October the Councils of the Little Entente and the Balkan Group issued identical *communiqués* supporting Yugoslavia. Goering then suggested a Yugoslav-German *rapprochement* but Belgrade rejected it. On the 22nd November Yugoslavia invoked Article XI in no uncertain terms. The Hungarians replied two days later through Eckhardt, their delegate to the Assembly. He agreed with Yugoslavia that peace was in danger, but the responsibility for the state of tension lay with the Yugoslav Government and Press. Immediately afterwards they sent in another note calling in Benes, who was President of the Council at this time, to resign on the grounds that he was a party to the case.

Between the 7th and the 10th of December the Yugoslav request was dealt with by the Council, but only after intense

negotiation and bitter oratory. These must be ranked among the busiest days in Eden's busy life. Eckhardt was encouraged by the backing of the French, Soviet, Rumanian, Czech and Turkish delegates. Jevtich, of Yugoslavia, who was supported only by the Italian representative, was uncompromisingly bitter, but even he was made to look mild before the tremendous militancy of Titulescu.

Laval—who as successor to Barthou was in many ways the most fatal consequence of the Marseilles murder—abandoned his usual suavity. He began at once with the ominous words, 'In this serious debate France stands by the side of Yugoslavia', and as for Hungarian Revisionism which Eckhardt had stressed, 'any person who tries to remove a frontier-mark disturbs the peace of Europe'. Aloisi kept the ball of dissension rolling by his emphasis on the difference between revisionism and terrorism. Litvinov made one of the first of his many disconcerting contributions to the League by declaring Russia's holy hatred of anything to do with terror.

In this atmosphere of passionate if well prepared prolixity, Anthony Eden's plea was that the discussion should be limited to the actual subject on the agenda and that all grievances not strictly relevant to it should be excluded. This sane and matter-of-fact attitude led to his appointment, amid general acclamation and without noticeable objection from the protagonists, as *rapporteur*. So intense were the discussions of detail and policy, right and wrong, that Eden was the self-same evening in a position to put before colleagues at a further meeting of the Council the draft of a resolution to cover every aspect of the dispute.

This resolution is in many ways the high-water mark of League arbitration. It was divided into four parts. The first unanimously deplored the crime which occasioned the loss of the lives of the knightly King Alexander I of Yugoslavia the Unifier, and of M. Louis Barthou; condemned 'this odious crime', and associating itself

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with the mourning of France and Jugoslavia, insisted that those responsible should be punished. The second recalled League obligations to repress terrorism and respect territorial integrity. The third section has the meat of the compromise in it. It took note of the diplomatic exchanges between Jugoslavia and Hungary from 1932 to 1934, and that 'various questions relative to the existence or the activities outside Jugoslav territory of terrorist elements have not been settled in a manner which has given satisfaction to the Jugoslav Government'. It then went on to deliver a verdict upon which Solomon in all his glory could hardly have improved.

'The Council . . . being of opinion as the result of these discussions and documents that certain Hungarian authorities may have assumed at any rate through negligence certain responsibilities relative to acts having a connexion with the preparation of the crime of Marseilles:

'Considering on the other hand that it is incumbent on the Hungarian Government, conscious of its international responsibilities, to take at once appropriate punitive action in the case of any of its authorities whose culpability may be established;

'Convinced of the goodwill of the Hungarian Government to perform its duty:

'Requests it to communicate to the Council the measures it takes to this effect.'

Those who are sceptical of the resources of diplomacy should ponder over these words. Although Eden called the Hungarian Government to order he levels no clear-cut accusation against it, nor does he suggest its acquiescence in any procedure incompatible with national sovereignty. When responsibility for the crime is presumed—the reference is simply to 'certain Hungarian authorities'; when the presumption is to be verified and the criminals punished the Hungarian Government alone is cited. The *Survey or International Affairs* for 1934 stresses the 'notable contrast offered here to the Austro-Hungarian Government's ultimatum of

July 23rd, 1914'—the outcome of similar circumstances—'but in which the plaintiff of the day had not only formulated his own accusation against the defendant, but had insisted on his own representatives taking part in judicial investigations on the plaintiff's territory'. The outcome of Eden's mediation was a formula 'acceptable to Hungary at the same time comprising other features which commended it to Jugoslavia'.

Eden had allowed it to be put down in black and white that the Jugoslavs had a grievance which had not to date been adequately settled, and in the fourth section of the resolution set up international machinery to prevent the recurrence of terrorist activities in the future. 'The *rapporteur's* draft resolution', the *Survey* adds, 'thus contained the necessary elements for a compromise, and thanks to Mr. Eden's tact and Herr Hitler's shadow, the resolution was adopted unanimously by the members of the Council, including the parties concerned'. Actually in Budapest and Belgrade alike the settlement was accorded a sincere welcome, and Eden accorded praise in terms usually associated with military glory.

The settlement had immediate international repercussions. *The Times* special correspondent at Geneva noted how in particular the Franco-Italian *rapprochement* had not only stood the strain but had been further reinforced during a long conversation between Monsieur Laval and Baron Aloisi on 11th December.

Just how great the achievement was can be assessed only if it is kept in mind that the Jugoslavs accompanied appeasement at Geneva by a sudden, brutal, and unprovoked expulsion of all Hungarian subjects living in Jugoslavia. By the 7th December—the day of Eden's election as *rapporteur*—two thousand had already arrived in Hungary, and there were rumours of a general order to evict all Hungarians from Jugoslavia at forty-eight hours' notice. Fortunately the Regent, Prince Paul, who had been abroad, got back in time

to cancel the order—fortunately, because public opinion throughout the world was outraged at what to all appearances was the most sinister and dangerous provocation.

Once again popular indignation diverted the British Government from its search for the non-committal and was largely responsible in leading it to make representations to the Yugoslav Government to bring the expulsion to an end. Sir John Simon talked in the House about the ‘importance of avoiding anything which might further embitter the dispute’, and the Yugoslavs were suitably impressed: when in due course the Hungarians sent in their memorandum to the League with its subordinate scapegoats and passport regulations, Eden in his capacity as *rapporteur* invited any members who had any observations to make to submit their views to him in writing. In the meantime he suggested that the Council should ‘take full note’ of the receipt of the memorandum. The Council agreed to these suggestions, the Yugoslav representative raised no objection and the Yugoslav-Hungarian dispute was no longer a threat to European peace.

During 1935 Eden received communications from Yugoslavia, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, and on a point of detail from the French Government as well. But the Yugoslavs, though placing certain objections to the action taken by Hungary, did not press their claims. On 25th May Eden triumphantly reported to the Council that, thanks to the goodwill of the Yugoslav Government and their desire to regard the question as closed, it was no longer necessary for the Council to ask the Hungarian Government for any further information in regard to the execution of the resolution of December 10th, 1934. The Council accepted the Report and the dispute was formally at an end. Eden had set the seal to his greatest personal success in League diplomacy. Perhaps the most fitting epitaph to this buried and forgotten victory for peace is John Gunther’s summary of Eden’s task: ‘It was like making Goering and Dimitroff kiss’.

But this is not all, for at the very time that he was reconciling Belgrade with Budapest over Marseilles, he was doing the same with Berlin and Paris over the Saar. In the historic Saar plebiscite the decisive initiative at the decisive hour rested with Anthony Eden.

As the time for the plebiscite drew nearer, uneasiness in Europe spread. It was one of the problems the Allies had shelved, not from any deep conviction that time would solve it, but because French economic interest and political pretension were so deeply ingrained as to defy compromise. That the expiry of the League Commission should coincide with the second anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, French and more neutral observers regarded with much the same helpless fascination as they would contemplate the action of a time-bomb. Hitler identified the return of the Saar with the removal of the one obstacle to Franco-German reconciliation. He said so in his broadcast speech when Germany left the League. The following month he made a formal request to the French Ambassador for the return of the territory. He returned to the attack in his speech to the Reichstag on January the 30th, 1934.

For France there were innumerable difficulties. It was alien to her security to make arrangements outside the framework of the League, while the behaviour of local Nazis gave grounds for legitimate concern and caution. The painstaking impartiality of Mr. Knox, the High Commissioner, was converted by an even more painstaking German propaganda into a régime of terror. On the whole the French were not in the mood to make generous concessions. One of Barthou's last public acts was to stress in a speech to the Council France's 'exceptional interest' in and 'special responsibilities' for the Saar. 'France does not repudiate these responsibilities and she would not evade them if an appeal were made to her.'

German anger was further roused by reports that the

French Government had issued instructions to the General commanding French troops on the Saar border on the measures to be taken if there were disturbances. The French amplified this threat by adding that they would intervene in response to existing obligations and to a formal request from the Governing Commission. The Germans replied that such an intervention would be equivalent to another occupation of the Ruhr, would infringe Locarno, and be an act of aggression.

In this atmosphere the British Government was instinctively negative and unhelpful. The French attitude might be 'entirely proper' but the contingencies feared were not likely to arise—'they did not therefore propose at present to take any special action in the matter.' Simon asserted in the House of Commons on November 5th 'that there never has been any suggestion of the use of British troops and that nothing of the sort was contemplated by the British Government.' The Saar Commission had the situation in hand, was quite equal to it and considered itself entitled to call on the aid of frontier troops if necessary. Ten days later Eden made a statement to the same effect. In the Lords some Opposition Peers urged that we should express our willingness to dispatch troops if they were wanted, but Lord Stanhope, the Under-Secretary, had nothing to add. What did a *status quo* régime mean? Only the League Council could decide. It was from Laval, Barthou's successor, that the first signs of conciliation came.

For with Barthou and Alexander died the Eastern Locarno, and with Laval emerged a more subtle but less rigid diplomacy from the Quai d'Orsay. Gunther has called it 'Lavaluation'; it meant in its fundamentals real, even if short term, peace with the historic family foe over the Rhine and with the fractious first cousin beyond the Brenner. Here was Briand's idealism; only, Laval had in mind to give it substance with the addition of his own Auvergnise dexterity and persistence. If policy was to have a direction it must

make its way by indirections. It seemed at first as if good was to come out of evil and France was to give the lead to constructive and sane causes.

Laval began by stressing at a Cabinet Council that the Saar was an international problem. Then in the Chamber he sent out an open invitation to other countries to assist France in the common task of maintaining international order. In particular he hoped that Great Britain and France might collaborate on a collective basis and within the framework of the Covenant. Then to the League Council he went further and asked the League to 'assume the responsibility which the French Government are and will always be willing to assume'. He asked that the duty of keeping order should be assigned to international contingents, and suggested that France would willingly agree not to send one if Germany would do the same.

The British response was immediate. Eden, as the British delegate, dismissed all former inhibitions, and stated beyond doubt that if the Council thought an international force in the Saar was desirable, 'and if the United Kingdom were invited to co-operate in that matter, then, provided other countries were prepared to make a contribution and on condition that both France and Germany assented to the arrangement, His Majesty's Government would also be prepared to supply a suitable proportion of such an international force. His Majesty's Government had authorized him to make the present statement because of their wish to make a positive contribution to the discharge of the responsibility which all those present shared as members of the League of Nations.' Whatever motives may have prompted the British Government to this *volte-face*, whether they were Mr. Knox's forebodings, Laval's conciliations, or Germany's strong right arm, the effect was electrifying. Britain it seemed was aware that isolation was not enough and a new and forceful leader in the person of Anthony Eden was to lead the First Crusade for international order and justice.

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The Times on the 8th December told the full story. Britain's decision had been taken at a full meeting of the Cabinet some time before, when it unanimously agreed to let Mr. Eden make the proposal if he thought fit. Eden had had an interview with Knox at Geneva and was so impressed with the urgency of the situation that he pressed the Government for its final consent. So the machinery was set in motion for talks on the fringe of the Council, and for Colonel Brind and his gallant men to earn special medals and publicity from a bloodless battle. Never before had a contingent of the British army crossed the Channel to play the rôle of a police escort, to protect life and not to destroy it. Except from the noisy isolationist minority there was general rejoicing, and the British public was in one of its perennial moods of self-congratulation. But when the thanks were handed round the chief bouquet was not for the Prime Minister or Stanley Baldwin, not for Sir John Simon or the Foreign Office, but for that industrious idealist the Lord Privy Seal.

For Eden 1934 closed with high prospects and a soaring prestige. As for the Saar it had done something to vindicate the Treaty of Versailles, the work of international commissions, and the potentialities of the new diplomacy.

If Hitler's claim that the Saar was the one outstanding question between France and Germany was valid, was it too much to suggest that the New Year of 1935 would herald Peace and Goodwill in the West?

There was to be no respite. From January 1935 Eden's career was to be caught up in a vortex of vast and tragic events; the consequences of which are still with us and in which the alternate modulations of his personal success or failure are lost in the confused struggle of nations and mass ideas. During recent months a number of both learned and popular commentaries have been published covering the Abyssinian conflict, the Rhineland occupation and the War in Spain, the three great diplomatic issues on which perhaps the final estimate of Anthony Eden's place in world history will

be made, but in nearly all of them the increasingly important parts played by Eden appear as incidents. His clear definitions are noted, his energy appraised, his arduous responsibilities stressed; but the estimates are formal: he is too young, he is the idealist who is defeated by facts.

In giving a brief *resumé* of the well worn narrative in terms of Eden's activities, the purpose here is to put forward a different emphasis, namely that in all these crises Eden has never had a full initiative. He has never commanded a united opinion, a united Cabinet and a complete authority over foreign affairs at one and the same time. When public opinion was in fact and the Cabinet nominally behind him, he was either a subordinate or a partner; when the Cabinet was in fact behind him over the abandonment of Sanctions, public opinion wanted him to resign; when he wanted firm guarantees from Mussolini, the Cabinet forced him to resign. He arrived too late on the scene to take opinion and authority by the scruff of the neck and force the world situation into his own ways of thinking.

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The tragedy begins with Laval's effort to follow up Barthou's work in Eastern Europe and his own success with the Saar, by a visit to Rome. It was clear that Laval had identified the prestige of himself and of the new Flandin administration with a Franco-Italian settlement of outstanding questions; it was less clear how the one outstanding question that really mattered, the tension on the frontier between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland was to be settled. If Mussolini meant to manipulate a war with Haile Selassie, it was difficult to see how France could acquiesce short of a complete reorientation of her foreign policy. A threat to a weak state in Africa was by definition at Geneva a threat to a weak state in Europe; a threat to a weak state in Europe was by definition at the Quai d'Orsay an attack on the French system of security by re-insurance.

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Laval, however, was prepared to take this logical risk for the substance of a quick, short-term Roman triumph. The strain put on Franco-Italian relations after the murder of King Alexander, the obvious implication of the Italian Government in that crime, called for drastic remedy. It would have been satisfactory to discuss the whole question of appeasement in the Danube basin and Central Europe. But the Italians were resolved to limit the agenda for the present to colonies and Austria. Had not Mussolini kept the peace of Europe by guaranteeing Austrian independence and mobilizing a quarter of a million men on the Brenner Pass when the Nazis murdered Dollfuss? This contribution to peace should be stressed, and as for colonies, Madame Tabouis writes that although care was taken to say nothing about Abyssinia, 'I discovered enough to convince me that it was the chief topic of conversation in political and fashionable circles at Rome. The Walwal incident had just been made known, although its origins remained a mystery.'

On January 3rd, the day before Laval's arrival in Rome, in view of the sinister secrecy of the Italians, Abyssinia had appealed to the League under Article XI of the Covenant. Efforts were at once made to persuade Abyssinia to suspend her appeal. Laval was angry; nothing could have been more ill-timed than this appeal. His mind was hardening against the infuriating rigidity of League procedure. Mussolini was angry. Laval's efforts to adjust her Libyan frontier was so much chicanery. The Duce is reported to have said that he was no collector of deserts. But although Laval's reception was cool and the final rejoicings artificial, the real business was apparently done at a reception held by the French Ambassador the Count de Chambrum at the Farnese Palace.

At this function Mussolini and Laval held a secret conference in the ambassador's study. What took place nobody knows. Laval had never said, but has only issued denials. Madame Tabouis' surmise is that Mussolini conducted the

conversation with sufficient skill to avoid a direct request that Laval should approve the Italian annexation of Abyssinia but that 'in reply to Mussolini's vague invitations he could do no more than assure the Duce that there was no further reason why French interests should hinder Italian interests in Ethiopia'. Laval, it seems, thought the Duce had treated him badly, the Duce that M. Laval was the only foreign statesman who understood Fascism. Madame Tabouis' comment on the delicacy of Laval's position is that in spite of all his finesse he was to be made to realize that 'a dictator is not an opponent in a by-election'.

There were all the outward appearances of success, but very little was really granted. Mussolini had deferred most of the problems; he promised more bayonets on the Brenner; but the Anschluss crisis had by January 1935 died down. From the French point of view at the time, the Duce had not gained much, a few miles of sand near Libya not far from Lake Tchad, the small island of Dommira opposite Perim making possible the control of the outlets to the Red Sea towards the Indian Ocean, and finally a share in the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway, the only motor road from Abyssinia to the Red Sea. 'So it came about that the agreements of Rome hastened the realization of Mussolini's imperialistic dream'.

Anthony Eden was speaking at Edinburgh on January the 8th. Success bred confidence and confidence bold words. Arising out of the Franco-Italian agreement he let it be known that 'balance of power is no longer British policy, ours is League policy. . . . Those who scoffed at the Saar have been shaken and I almost said silenced; but it is impossible that Lord Beaverbrook and silence could be on more than nodding acquaintance'. He ended up with the hope that 1935 would see the success of disarmament. Four days before, at the Newcastle Rotary Club, he spoke with prophetic irony of 1935 'as what I believe will prove to be the most challenging year in our post-war history'. Such placards as 'Peace or

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War?' he asserted did more harm than good. 'I am myself an optimist.'

But for the rest of the month he was in Geneva. His services as mediator were in brisk demand. Finland and Bolivia, Persia and Paraguay alike experienced his strength as *rapporteur* and were duly appreciative or dismayed. His recommendation in the disastrous and futile Chaco war that the arms embargo should be lifted for Bolivia alone, as Paraguay had refused mediation, brought widespread praise. The representatives of France, Russia, Sweden and Spain supported him in this clear-cut view; but the slaughter for a barren swamp in a green hell of South American jungle was to work itself out until mere exhaustion and disgust of the combatants brought its own formula of peace. The voice of Eden at Geneva could not carry all that distance.

The situation in Danzig had deteriorated; the Nazi virus was spreading through the city. As *rapporteur* Eden felt bound to take notice of the anxiety expressed about its future. The Commissioner Mr. Lester was asked to report on the position. *The Times* headlined its account 'A Cloud at Geneva' and referred gravely to Mr. Eden's various difficult tasks of mediation. On one day he was broadcasting from Geneva to the nations on the true meaning of the Saar settlement, on another reaching agreement on a territorial claim made by Finland against this country. *The Times* duly noted that Mr. Eden had mediated in no fewer than three disputes at the same time and that he knew how to hold the confidence of both sides. The Finnish delegate spoke of his 'generous and conciliatory declaration'.

Eden's feverish activity was simply part of a general period of intense diplomatic preparation. Laval's success in Rome was followed by his visit to London and the famous *communiqué* of February 3rd which foreshadowed a Western air pact. There was always a reserve about this particular

project. When Simon broadcast to the nation explaining its terms he spoke with an obvious and unwonted nervousness. Was it to be a separate treaty, or part of a more general settlement? That was the question round which the intrigues centred. Flandin for once was sufficiently indiscreet to separate it from more ambitious designs. The Germans were for once acute enough to take him at his word. It seemed that at last there would be no legitimate excuse to postpone constructive action for Peace but Great Britain, France and Germany by means of three *détentes* succeeded in restoring the atmosphere of crisis before war.

In March the British Government published the first of the staggering White Papers on Defence. The Press informed the public that it was our contribution to Peace. In fact, without any accompanying assurance as to policy, it was a portentous addition to the residue of European fear and suspicion. As a result of the Laval talks, it had been arranged that Simon and Eden should go to Berlin to explain and to explore the possibilities of the Air Pact. Hitler was interested, perhaps there was a chance to convert his interest into some positive contribution. The timing of the White Paper amounted almost to a theatrical sense of dramatic irony. As far as the Simon and Eden visit was concerned, Hitler's reaction was immediate and natural. He contracted a sore throat. France, of course, sensed danger in all this. Feeling in Paris was mixed over the visit of the British ministers to Berlin. Officially the French Government could only rejoice at this attempt to amplify what was essentially a Franco-British proposal; unofficially it was jealous and apprehensive lest Simon and Hitler should find friendship at France's expense.

France accordingly chose this moment to produce the second of the great *détentes*. The decision was taken, after anxious debate and ample excuse, to lengthen French army service to two years, a year before schedule. The technical reason was that France was entering upon the lean years.

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Enlistment quotas were bound to fall between 1935 and 1939. It was necessary to forestall this inevitable calamity.

Hitler's reaction was again immediate and natural but rather more drastic than a sore throat. He took the occasion to perpetrate the third great *détente*. He announced the existence of a German Air Force and inaugurated conscription. Surely this was more than British complacency could condone. It was not. Actually Hitler had merely shocked the world by giving public validity to a secret the world shared.

Notes passed between London and Berlin, assurances were exchanged and on the evening of the 18th March Eden declared that 'in the work that lies ahead of us in the capitals of Europe, our faith in the collective peace system must play a prominent part'. The next day it was announced that the arrangements for the visit were to stand, but that out of deference to French feelings Eden would cross the Channel in advance of Simon and meet French and Italian representatives in Paris first.

By the time this courtesy call had been carried out France and Italy had sent in yet another of their stern protests to Berlin against the unilateral repudiation of treaties, while Sir John in a crowded and anxious House made a statement precise but wholly uncommunicative. Old George Lansbury pleaded that the peoples of the world asked only for peace and that this was the most anxious week since August 1914. Mr. Maxton and Colonel Gretton, diehards of the Left and Right, who ironically enough sit next to each other in the Commons, both agreed from their respective viewpoints that the visit of the Foreign Secretary and Lord Privy Seal to Berlin was so much waste of time. All through, Mr. Baldwin's feet were up on the dispatch case; his eyes were shut. He symbolized benevolent and tired neutrality.

Chapter XVI



GRAND TOURS

SIMON AND EDEN were in Berlin by March 24th, and the conversations with the Führer took place on the following two days. Failure was writ large over the closing *communiqué* issued for the information of the world. Everyone hastened to explain that the purpose of the meeting had been for the respective parties to learn not to agree. This limited objective had been all too easily attained. Hitler in one of his more difficult moods had left the British ministers speechless with a series of direct and sweeping demands. He held out no hope of reconciliation.

What precise form the conversations took remains a secret, but it is certain that Simon received one of the severest personal jolts of his suave career. He was face to face with perhaps the most temperamental tyrant known to history. Hitler acts through his nerves rather than his brain, and Simon at once got on his nerves. Eden held little more than a watching brief, but what he saw must have convinced him that compromise and good faith flew out of Berlin when Hitler knocked at the door and received admittance. They met two Führers, the one blustering, speaking to his guests in his harsh guttural voice as though to a meeting of a million Nazis, the other after supper silently sobbing to the strains of the *Moonlight Sonata* as rendered in a dimly lit drawing-room by the incomparable Backhaus.

Eden sat awkwardly tapping his knee during both of these manifestations. Simon came straight home, and on 28th March was forced to admit in reply to a Parliamentary question that 'all the topics mentioned in the London *communiqué* of 3rd February had been brought under discussion' and that 'considerable divergence of opinion between the two

Governments was revealed by the conversations'. Hitler had refused the Eastern Locarno with its multilateral guarantees, was not prepared to have anything to do with Moscow. He could not contemplate Lithuania in any non-aggression pact. His armament demands were what the experts had guessed they would be after the conscription decree. The only definitions that held any hope for the future were his acceptance of air parity with France and Germany, although he apparently told Simon and Eden that it had already been attained, and his contentment with a 35 to a 100 ratio with the British Navy. It was decided that if it was logical for Sir John to return at once and let the Cabinet know the worst, it was equally logical for Anthony Eden to go deeper into this turbulent Europe.

Thus it fell to the lot of the Lord Privy Seal to undertake the most bizarre of all the post-war voyages of diplomatic discovery. For on the evening of March 26 he left Berlin in a special eastward bound train and by the evening of the 27th had crossed the frontiers of the Soviet Union. He was accompanied by M. Maisky, the astute ambassador to the Court of St. James, and arrived with him in Moscow on the 28th in time for a conversation that afternoon with Litvinov and for a reception in his honour the same evening.

The atmosphere of these Moscow conversations has been brilliantly portrayed by Douglas Reed in his study of Europe's neurosis, *Insanity Fair*. Reed's position in his capacity as journalist was as much exploratory as Eden's was in his capacity as politician. For Reed was the first *Times* representative to get nearer to Red Russia on his paper's authority than Riga; while as for Eden no Conservative politician had got nearer to Moscow since the Revolution than Geneva. History was made on the evening of the 28th March 1935, when Maxim Litvinov, the Bolshevik, proposed the toast of his Britannic Majesty King George V, and Anthony Eden of Eton and Christ Church, King and Country, replied by raising his glass to Lenin of immortal memory. Litvinov led off

with a quotation from Sir Austen Chamberlain to the effect that friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain was essential for the preservation of peace and he invoked the plan for collective action outlined in London on February the 3rd.

Eden's reply was cordial and confident. With the usual reservation that the visit was exploratory and not executive, he affirmed that British policy was based on the League, that the essence of the League was its universal influence and that accordingly Russia's adherence to it was a great gain to the League. Peace was everyone's objective. The next day Anthony Eden was taken into the recesses of the Kremlin to meet Joseph Stalin. There were present in addition to Stalin and Eden, Krestinsky, Maisky, Molotov, and Litvinov who acted as interpreter, Lord Chilston, British Ambassador in Moscow, and Strang of the Foreign Office, who took down what was said during the whole of Eden's tour in what is reputed to be the fastest of all longhands. The papers noted that the visitors were deeply impressed by Stalin's knowledge of world's affairs.

Reed gives a running commentary of the gist of the conversation. It was a case of where journalists are strictly without information but know exactly what happened through the friend of a friend. He describes how that night while Lord and Lady Chilston sat talking before the fire in the big drawing-room of the Embassy, Eden with Lord Cranborne his faithful satellite always, and Hankey (son of the omniscient Sir Maurice) received the journalists in a little room with chintz coloured sofas and chairs. Reed at once admitted that he could not ask Eden to tell them what Stalin had said, but he offered to supply Eden with a version that had seeped through the privacy of the Kremlin. 'That is fair enough,' was Eden's comment, 'go ahead.' Reed then goes on to describe the topics that were raised. First Stalin asked Eden if he thought the danger of war greater or less than in 1914. Eden replied less; but Stalin developed his reasons for

taking the opposite view, and stated that whereas in 1914 there was only one nation—Germany—whose expansionist ambitions involved a threat of war, to-day there were two—Germany and Japan. ‘Is that wrong?’ Reed asked. ‘No,’ Eden replied, ‘it is not wrong’. Stalin then expressed his profound respect for the German people and their qualities. No attempt to hold down or isolate such a nation in the heart of Europe could in the long run succeed; nevertheless Germany was for the time being in a dangerous mood, and those who had at heart the interest of European peace were bound to take precautionary measures. Eden nodded in approval.

‘And I hear,’ Reed added, ‘that at one moment in your conversation he glanced at a map which showed the little island in the Atlantic which is England and the sprawling mass over Europe and Asia which is Russia, and in reference to England remarked that it was strange to think that the issue of peace and war lay in the hands of so small a country. ‘Isn’t it uncanny?’ said Eden turning to Cranborne and then to me. ‘How do you do it? Were you hiding under the table?’ Eden and his colleagues as has always been the case with other visitors to the Soviet who have been privileged to meet its mysterious dictator, found Stalin astonishingly well informed on the intricacies of the European situation—a man of rugged intellect, in policy a shrewd opportunist.

The same evening *The Times* describes how a scene ‘inconceivable not long ago was witnessed at the Moscow Grand Opera . . . when the Lord Privy Seal of Great Britain was applauded long and warmly by an entirely proletarian audience which clapped enthusiastically as *God Save the King* was played. Then followed the *Internationale*’. Eden Chilston, members of the British Embassy staff, the Litvinovs and Maisky were among a big party that sat in front of the former Imperial box, ‘while the proletarian audience intently watched a superb production of the ballet

Le Lac des Cygnes.' Reed's commentary on this splendid occasion fills in some of the gaps in the official *Times* description. Eden he sees in the ex-Imperial box—'very Balliol and well-groomed'. 'The House was packed full with men and women, boys and girls who, judged by Western standards, I put down as members of the proletariat, but no, I was told the proletariat isn't so lucky. These were the members of the privileged class which the proletarian State is throwing up, higher officials, engineers and experts'.

The next two days Eden spent sightseeing and in conclave with Litvinov. Eden's visit roughly coincided with the completion and opening of Moscow's latest wonder, its Underground. 'Moscow overhead,' says Reed, 'was tumble-down and out at elbows; in Moscow's underground we travelled through gleaming marble halls with blazing lights in charge of spick and span officials. The splendour of it took our breath away, and at last we came to the surface again to breathe'. He describes how the Muscovites paid their fares just for the fun of riding on it and how it at once became their most popular amusement. Eden was driven round in semi-state; and was given a chance to assimilate the old and the new, the sickle and the ikon. There was lavish entertainment at Litvinov's country home, and *The Times* allowed itself a lighter moment when it described how the butter served at a luncheon there bore the inscription 'Peace is indivisible', and how the guests accordingly showed some hesitation in using their knives to cut it!

The key sentence in the long *communiqué* issued at the end of Eden's visit was that 'there is at present no conflict of interest between the British and Soviet Governments on any one of the main issues of international policy'. When Eden arrived he found the traditional hatred lending itself to the belief that England was the origin of every threat to Russian frontiers; but according to the *Survey of International Affairs*, perhaps the most important result of his visit 'was to diminish, if not completely to dissipate those suspicions of



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Eden admiring the view of Moscow from the Square before the Great Palace of the Kremlin, 29th March, 1935

British aims. In simpler terms it was as Reed puts it, 'Russia does not want anything England has, Germany does'. The butter-pats represented the view towards which England was leaning and of which Eden was increasingly the spokesman, the view that peace is indivisible.

Reed's last impression of the visit is Moscow station, 'where the drab and silent crowds had gathered again. The Union Jacks and Soviet banners remained affectionately linked. We all shook hands and boarded the train. Litvinov took leave of Eden with the words, 'I wish you all success, for your success will be our success now!'

The Grand Tour continued. On the evening of April 1st Eden was in Warsaw—not only the geographical but also the political Clapham Junction of Europe—and he stayed there until the evening of the 3rd. He met the aged and dying Pilsudski who had hacked the new Poland into shape out of the chaotic ruin of the war, and he met Beck. Colonel Beck has attracted to himself a sinister reputation in the chancelleries of Europe as a man of dark suspicions and deep designs. While in Paris as a Polish military attaché he became so unpopular that the French took the drastic step of demanding his recall. Much subsequent European history may have turned upon this personal insult. For Polish policy linked by formal treaty both to France and Germany has in the critical years of German revival looked for salvation more in Berlin than Paris. When Eden got to Warsaw he found the diplomatic atmosphere chilly. Splendid receptions, photographs of our handsome minister with the glamorous Madame Beck, did not make up for a noticeable absence of positive political results.

Pilsudski was tired; the proposed Eastern pact did nothing to revive his departing spirits, and as Sir John Simon put it, 'M. Beck explained that Poland had by her existing agreement with the Soviet Union on the one hand and with Germany on the other established tranquil conditions upon her two frontiers, and the question Poland was bound to ask

herself was whether any new proposals would improve or trouble the good atmosphere established by those two agreements.' The answer as far as Colonel Beck was concerned was politely in the negative.

At Prague Eden met with a more encouraging reception. Here was another father of his people in President Masaryk and another omniscient controller of foreign affairs in Dr. Benes. Geography made clearer demands upon them, and Benes was genuine in his hopes that more would be heard of the Eastern Locarno at Stresa. For at Stresa Eden's experiences were to be collated and the 'allied' Powers work out the policy that would convey to Hitler the urgent need for peace. No doubt Benes, as he waved good-bye to his guests from the aerodrome, was also genuine in his hope that Eden would be the British delegate when the time came for the statesmen to gather in secret yet grandiose conclave on the tiny island Isola Bella.

But the aeroplane with Eden on board shortly after leaving Leipzig for Cologne ran into a storm of tropical violence over the Black Mountains. According to Reed, who was also on board, it was 'a foul trip, the worst I ever made . . . We flew into thick cloud and then suddenly snow was beating about us, and the machine was thrown here and there and let down with a bump into a deep void and then again rocketed upwards and given a smack on one wing and a smack on the other, and a bang on the solar plexus and a kidney punch that sent the tail spinning round.' 'I knew,' he adds, 'that we were flying over wooded and mountainous country with no hope of a forced landing.' When they landed at Cologne the flight had to be abandoned, but by then Eden, already exhausted by the rush from capital to capital, the endless dispatches and receptions, had broken down, was ill and ordered by his doctors to take a complete rest from world politics for several weeks.

So Stresa was without the one man who could have given its deliberations perspective. Without Eden at Stresa the

senior statesmen of France and Great Britain, presided over by Mussolini, lapsed into the old negotiations, and Eden's visits were material only for Eden's autobiography. Undoubtedly he had gathered together unique personal experience. At thirty-seven he was the most travelled member of the British Government. He had met more European leaders than the whole Cabinet lumped together. He has always been reserved over his tours. One friend recalls visiting him at his nursing-home and advising him to keep a record of his impressions which he said would be far more interesting to posterity than the failure or success of fleeting policies. Eden agreed, and added apparently that he had formed no high opinion of Stalin. 'He offered me a cigarette,' said Eden, 'with the same sort of smile as he would employ in sending a man to his execution!'

As for concrete political information Eden had found fear the predominant factor among the governments he visited. Russia, with the least to fear, the most afraid; Germany, with the most to fear, the least afraid. He had also found that the Anglo-French programme of 3rd February, in many ways the most considerable joint statement France and England had produced since the war, was without sufficiently fervent support from those for whom it was designed. *The Times* correspondent, in reporting Eden's praise of Masaryk and Benes, adds the important reservation that 'Mr. Eden's visit will by now have left him with little doubt that the Eastern Pact cannot be achieved. He may well have been forced to the view that the only practical method of ensuring European peace would be some kind of comprehensive European settlement rather than a system of regional pacts. . . . The continental mind holds that England . . . should be willing to join in a European system clearly directed against a potential peace breaker.'

Eden and Simon had been face to face with Germany 'just as intransigent as France, but manifestly no longer afraid'; while Hitler 'gave the impression of a man looking forward

with grim defiance to a stormy future.' ¹ Russia was terrified lest the capitalist powers should settle their squabbles, that the two sated powers should finally decide to buy off the two hungry ones, and turn on the common enemy, Bolshevism. It had almost happened with the Four-Power Pact of 1933; it might come back to life at Stresa.

France also was intransigent and afraid. Her consistent policy since the war has been admirably defined in the *Survey of International Affairs* as being to sacrifice everything else for the sake of retaining the power, without the will, to make a preventive war upon Germany if and when the occasion should arise. 'Now that the occasion had arisen, France acted on her feelings by refraining from playing the trump-card which she had insisted at such cost upon keeping in her hand.' The more France stood her legal ground against Germany, the more she gave way to the fact of German aggression. But France was not to play the Pharisee alone. Within eighteen months Mussolini had completed his conquest of Abyssinia; and Great Britain, together with Anthony Eden, had passed with legal exactitude on the other side.

Stresa merely intensified differences within the Cabinet on the vexed question of commitment. While MacDonald and Simon were negotiating, Neville Chamberlain was responsible for a calculated indiscretion at a private Press Conference where he attempted to commit the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in advance to a non-committal policy. MacDonald expostulated indignantly from Geneva. Baldwin tried to iron out the differences, but the immediate effect of Chamberlain's information was to undermine the psychological value of the Conference. Actually, MacDonald and Simon went with every intention of keeping their hands free, but the effect of recriminations and explanations was to lend doubt to the honesty of our brokerage. The Conference

¹ See *Survey of International Affairs* for 1935, Vol. I, page 154.

settled nothing. The British Ministers were anxious to place no obstacles in the way of Germany's return to the League, but the Conference itself—which was called together to consider the consequences of Germany's treaty repudiations—was hardly a contribution to that end. We offered moral support for the Eastern Pact and for Austrian independence. We were loyal to Locarno, and we were willing to enter an air convention. It was, in fact, the declaration of 3rd February with the corners knocked off. But in one particular respect it was suspect.

There was a general impression that Messrs. Mussolini, Flandin, Laval, MacDonald, and Simon could not have spent so many hours in guarded discussion unless there was something more to it all than the mere *communiqué*. Among the Foreign Office staff in attendance was an expert on Abyssinian affairs. Was he asked to Stresa just to enjoy the scenery, or were his services invoked to clarify what was already an obscure controversy and what threatened to be an irritating diplomatic sideshow?

When Simon returned he was at once questioned in Parliament, and did his best to silence criticism with a sprightly half-truth. 'The Italo-Ethiopian dispute was never on the agenda of the Stresa Conference, and the subject was not discussed there,' was his reply. He added that informal conversations took place between British and Italian officials on the grazing rights of nomadic British Somali tribes. When Hoare succeeded to the Foreign Office he reiterated Simon's assertion on 1st August, only to modify it on 22nd October. The next day Eden tried to clear up this vital and perhaps deliberate confusion. Reports were current that Mussolini had been willing to raise the whole question of Stresa, and the Parliamentary Opposition was able to make much of the point that, if the British delegates deliberately refrained from mentioning it, Mussolini might well have grounds for believing that we were in the circumstances condoning his aggression by our silence.

There is no final answer to these grave doubts; but on the whole Eden made the best of this exceedingly bad job for which he was in no way responsible. He repeated that the dispute had never been on the agenda of the Conference, and added that 'in the light of the fact that the Conference had been called to deal solely with the complexities of the European situation, there was no reason whatever why it should have been.' He went on—and they are words of which historians must in due course take account—that with agreement reached on the matters actually on the agenda 'it was hardly to be supposed that one of the three Powers who had just declared that the object of their joint policy was the collective maintenance of peace within the framework of the League of Nations would take any action in any other contingent which would jeopardize that framework.' This brought Lloyd George to his feet. 'Does that mean,' he asked, 'that there was no discussion between our Prime Minister and our Foreign Secretary and Signor Mussolini?'

EDEN: 'No official discussions at all.'

LYDD GEORGE: 'Were there any discussions?'

EDEN: 'Not between the heads of delegations.'

Thus it was that Eden, on his own admission, was the heir to an ambiguous and compromising situation. At the beginning of April *The Times* was confidently forecasting that 'no questions will arise of taking major decisions, and it is not suggested at present that any British Ministers other than Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden should go to Stresa. If Eden's illness had not decreed otherwise this ambiguity might well have been avoided.'

For the rest of April and the first half of May Eden was recuperating, but by the time the vast rejoicings of the Silver Jubilee were safely over he was on public platforms again. On 17th May he spoke at Fulham, and was fiercely anti-isolationist. He emphasized again German fears of Russia, and did his best to acquit our policy

of being directed against any nation. This speech was reported at some length in Germany, and was the object of bitter criticism. In spite of his efforts to underline our disinterested approach, the German interpretation of his comments was simply that 'England regards Germany as the most probable enemy.' On another occasion he was returning to the attack on Beaverbrook. Isolation did not assume reality simply because Lord Beaverbrook was backing it, and as a further sly dig at Empire Free Traders, Joseph Chamberlain was cited as the first man to realize that isolation was impracticable.

On 31st May came one of the first signs that Eden's activist internationalism was marking him out for the special invective of the dictatorial Press. The *Tevere*, the most Anglophobe of all Mussolini's papers, began to make offensive references to Eden's dress sense and to identify him as the special enemy of Italy. It was roused to anger by the rumours of British hostility to an Italian adventure in Abyssinia. 'This,' commented *The Times* correspondent in Rome, 'is the first really serious divergence in policy between Britain and Italy since Italy became a united kingdom.' The *Tevere* was the paper which, during the height of the Abyssinian crisis, picked out one of the militant full-page advertisements of the British Israelites as a typical example of Fleet Street's editorial opinion. Eden was soon to be overwhelmed with apocrypha of this nature. The British Embassy began what soon became a regular trek of protest to the relevant Italian officials, and received an equally regular promise that the matter raised would be duly examined.

It was clear that by now Italy was well set on winning back German friendship. However much the two Dictators may have disliked each other after their first disastrous meeting at Venice, they had been able sufficiently to set aside personal prejudice in order to produce a paper plan allowing both Italy and Germany spheres of interest that would not clash.

Whitehall with a cold, almost panic, determination set its official mind to breaking the axis before the steel hardened. So we rushed to Stresa in order to denounce and to consider Germany's unilateral repudiation of treaties. So we rushed back from Stresa to enter into the Anglo-German naval agreement—itself as gross a violation of the spirit if not the letter of our pledged word as any since the war.

It was clever, it was realistic; but it had a tinge of continental chicanery which did not commend itself to the great mass of the electorate. It pleased the permanent officials, but it finally undermined Simon's position as interpreter of the honesty of Britain's intentions, and put him at the head of those on the list for Cabinet transfer.

One of Simon's final acts as Foreign Secretary—which, one is bound to concede, had about it almost the quality of aesthetic malice—was to send Anthony Eden to explain away the Anglo-German naval treaty to France, and to compensate Mussolini in East Africa. Naturally enough Eden was not well received either in Paris or Rome. That he was able to put up a show at all argues much for the elasticity of his conversational technique. There was, perhaps, something to be said for his exploiting diplomatic illness on this occasion. The *détente* was not of his making—why should he be involved in the odium that must necessarily follow it? Indeed, those who admire Anthony Eden for his ultimate firmness and wonder why he did not dig his heels in earlier, might do better to stress this instance of complacency rather than the withdrawal of sanctions when the personal gesture, though infinitely more flamboyant, would have had a less penetrating political effect. For on this occasion not only did Eden have to suffer Laval's peasant irony but also Mussolini's theatrical wrath. It was perhaps the most humiliating moment of his career. He was taking to Rome considerable concessions. Abyssinia was to cede to Italy a portion of the Ogaden and to receive from Great Britain an outlet to the sea at Zeila, in

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British Somaliland, together with a corridor, fifty miles long, linking the port to the Abyssinian hinterland. All Great Britain was asking, if these terms were acceptable, was the retention of certain specified grazing rights. Ogaden was the literal *casus belli*. It was reasonable to expect that Mussolini might be prepared to negotiate. He was not.

Between the 24th and 26th of June Eden had seen the Duce for the last time, and it was a brusque farewell. The terms were rejected out of hand. Eden, without in any way competing with his father's temper, did not allow Mussolini to have a monopoly over wrath. When questioned as to what the British Government's reactions would be to a comprehensive military campaign by Italy, he is reported to have said that in that case the Suez would be no longer available for Italian troopships. An imaginative journalist has caught the atmosphere in which the interview was held by attributing to Eden the remark immediately afterwards that 'he treated me as though I had stolen something!' Mussolini went on with his scorching oratory. At Cagliari it was 'we have old and new accounts to settle—we will settle them.' At Sassari he denounced foreign public opinion as a 'ridiculous puppet that would be burnt up by the zeal of the Blackshirts,' and as soon as Eden had gone, at Eboli he spoke of 'the revolutionary people of Italy' who had 'irrevocably decided' to carry the struggle to its conclusion.

It was to the rumbling of Italian thunder that the long expected Cabinet reshuffle took place. MacDonald, weary and ineffective, made way for Baldwin as Prime Minister. Baldwin thereupon removed Simon from the storm-centre to the comparative security of the Home Office, and appointed Sir Samuel Hoare to take his place. At the same time Anthony Eden, whom many felt to have staked the higher claim for the Foreign Secretaryship, was promoted to the Cabinet without portfolio; but in response to Baldwin's subtle instincts and shrewd electoral sense was to be nicknamed 'Minister for League of Nations Affairs'. Nobody ques-

tioned this decision; the only criticism was that Eden was not adequately rewarded.

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At what, for British Conservatism, was the absurd and childish age of thirty-seven, Anthony Eden was a Cabinet Minister with a status that had no precedent and opportunities that were boundless. Yet so breathless were the times that no one paused long to reflect on the full implications of what was little short of being a political miracle. In some ways his dizzy promotion went beyond mere personal achievement. He filled a need, he was available.

About this time *The Spectator* began a feature which it called 'Occasional Biographies'. Number three on its list was Mr. Eden, six days before the reshuffle. It put concisely the typical view. 'In these last three years,' it began, 'when with each month the international situation has worsened and the prospects of disarmament have become increasingly remote, and Europe is once again as it was in 1914, an armed camp, one man has stood out with courage and consistency for the translation of the ideals of the post-war peace system into realities. . . . At thirty-seven he has won a position for himself abroad and in his own country that no man of comparable age has achieved in our time.'

How had he done it? 'I would give as the fundamental cause his deep sincerity.' Wrong beliefs was not the trouble with our leading statesmen, but 'that they have ceased to believe in anything at all.' 'Apart from Mr. Baldwin, there is hardly a man of front-bench rank who ever gives evidence on any question of real conviction.' Anthony Eden believes passionately in the League of Nations. 'I remember a speech of his in Birmingham,' the writer continues, 'a year or two ago when, with reference to the Geneva system of settling disputes, he suddenly exclaimed: "Is that method wrong—is that machinery wrong? My answer to that question after considering it as deeply as I can is: No, a

thousand times no." One felt as he said it that here was something for which he was prepared to go to the stake, or rather its modern equivalent, the political wilderness. It is his essential disinterestedness and honesty of purpose that has impressed the foreigner. They feel that Albion could never be perfidious if he was in charge of her foreign affairs.'

The writer went on to praise Eden's great political courage. 'I talked to him on the eve of his last visit to Geneva when, so far as the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia was concerned, all seemed lost and a march to Walwal with all its incalculable repercussions on the European situation appeared only a matter of days. "The League must stand firm," he said to me; "it cannot afford another Manchuria!"'

He had winning ways with all his colleagues. He knew how to deal with foreign correspondents. His powers of concentration and industry at Geneva rivalled those of Lord Curzon. It was more than a mere misunderstanding of the position of Lord Privy Seal that invariably brought him the name in the foreign Press of 'Lord' Eden. His fluent French attracted the Quai d'Orsay. His war record impressed the Wilhelmstrasse. The German Press paid to him in their opinion the greatest compliment within their power by describing him as a 'Front Soldat', but 'his sensitive mind reacts against the idea of distinction.' The story of the state shooting party in Sweden is then cited. 'An elk suddenly came into view, and Eden, as the distinguished guest, was naturally accorded the privilege of shooting it. But all he could say was "Isn't it a beauty!" and the beast bounded past untouched.' Would he attain the position of Foreign Secretary? In terms of his Parliamentary technique and popularity his chance was good. His speeches were quiet, confident, polished, but his progress has been too easy. . . . How would he shape, for instance, as Minister of Labour—would he be able to retrieve a critical situation or dominate an angry Opposition when something more was required than grace and charm? Is he, in a word, a little too precious?

The writer's answer was optimistic. Anthony Eden was infinitely more than a clever strategist in politics. He had been too often up against it at Geneva not to have developed hidden reserves of power essential to great Parliamentary leadership. 'Not since Lord Rosebery has there come into English politics a man so full of promise. In the case of Lord Rosebery the promise for a variety of reasons was not fulfilled. I am convinced that it will be otherwise with Anthony Eden.'

Eden's promotion to the Cabinet, then, occasioned no surprise while the complexity of the international situation suggested the need for some special reinforcement of the Foreign Office. That Sir Samuel Hoare and Eden should be called upon to exercise what almost amounted to parallel authority over our foreign policy gave widespread satisfaction. There might be loose ends in the arrangement; but the personal qualities of the two men, it was felt, would overcome all technical difficulties and objections.

For Sir Samuel Hoare had just steered through Parliament one of the most stupendous legislative undertakings of our or any other time. Through all the anxious months as Secretary of State he nursed and reared the great India Act, and with an almost incredible persistence and suavity he wore down Churchill's melodramatic antagonism. He showed himself a man of quiet dignity with a wonderful grasp of detail. Tory, no doubt, as twenty years the Member for Chelsea would suggest, but Tory Democrat as well. Hoare's reputation was at its zenith. In the general estimate, it was no doubt felt that he would supply nearly all Simon's intellectual qualities, with the essential addition either of conviction itself or belief in conviction. Yet within six months this experiment in diarchy was to have crashed to the ground and to have coincided with one of the most disastrous periods in the whole history of British foreign policy. By September 1935 Hoare's career seemed set for 10 Downing Street. By November 1935 it had

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suffered a blow from which it can never fully recover. The truth is that Hoare's fame and disgrace were from the beginning bound up with the destiny of the Emperor of Abyssinia, and by the time Hoare took over Haile Selassie's cause it had already been irreparably betrayed.

On 7th June Hoare made his first speech as Foreign Secretary. It was a calm and well arranged effort, which gave full credit to Italy's need for expansion, but it met with no response from Rome. There is an important footnote in the *Survey* which draws attention to the date of this speech, and suggests that 'it should be borne in mind, with reference to the sequel, by any student of international affairs who is concerned to take a just view of persons as well as a balanced view of events. This impartial commentary asserts that, if Sir Samuel Hoare had cared to make his own apologia at the expense of a colleague, he might have argued with considerable force that the diplomatic battle had already been lost for him before he was asked by Mr. Baldwin to do his best to win it'.¹ By the time Eden was invited to pick up the reins the situation was wholly beyond repair. At the end of May Eden had been successful in working out the Council Resolutions which had led Mussolini to accept the semblance of arbitration and in doing so to convert the Abyssinian dispute into an avowed international question. This was a real achievement. The day before Mussolini's acceptance of the Eden-Laval formulæ, Mussolini had screamed to the world that it was better to live as a lion one day than a hundred years as a sheep. But then had come our offer of British Somaliland, and by 1st July Eden was reporting to the House that 'I much regret that the suggestion did not commend itself to Signor Mussolini'.

The first leader in *The Times* commented that 'Mr. Eden's statement added disappointingly little to what was already known. . . . It might at least have been considered possible to impart a little more information about the state of

¹ *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, Vol. II, page 161.

negotiations in Europe'. Eden's news about the plan was given to 'an astonished and slightly displeased House'. On the 5th he was facing criticisms of our roving Foreign Office missions and warnings of the dangers inherent in 'amateur diplomacy', but Eden stoutly defended the ten recent visits of the National Government to Europe as being neither 'unnecessary nor altogether unsuccessful'. Two days later he was defending the Government, and in particular Hoare, from another Right Wing onslaught. This time it was Churchill on the dangers of Diarchy. As with most of Churchill's attacks the personal *motif* undermined the public quality of his argument. The Anglo-German Naval Pact was not in its essentials either anti-Stresa or anti-League was Eden's thesis. As for the visit to Mussolini: 'Nothing was further from the mind of the Government than to go behind the backs of anyone'. According to *The Times*, 'this speech had a great success'.

It was, however, through the League of Nations Union that there was the greatest impact with public opinion. During the spring Lord Cecil had been organizing his momentous Peace Ballot. It was an all-embracing questionnaire. It asked for 'Yes' and 'No' answers to questions demanding three-hour essays in reply; but the response was overwhelming, the organization it entailed and the voluntary help it received made it the greatest private political inquiry the world had ever known.

A large quota of the twelve million who voted 'for' the League did not fully understand the implications of their support, but in spite of all reservations, the Peace Ballot was probably to be (apart from Mrs. Simpson) the biggest single shock to Baldwin's boundless complacency. The repercussions on American opinion were most impressive, for America saw it in all its immensity. As a straight vote it far outdid anything Hitler or Goebbels have ever accomplished—who can, of course, never accomplish a straight vote. But for the most part the British public took it all

quietly, seemingly unaware of the dramatic possibilities of their unanimity.

The sponsors of the Peace Ballot were very soon to find their own Sir Galahad in Anthony Eden, but at no stage during its organization and campaign did he give it the slightest encouragement. Indeed, there are strong grounds for believing that he shared the view of *The Times*, and until a very late stage in the proceedings was actively hostile to it. Perhaps he disliked it for its attempt to oversimplify what he, above all men, knew to be a complex issue, and thus for leading the British electorate into a facile optimism contrary to its own shrewd and cautious instincts. To an expert politician, open opposition is often more desirable than abject or glib support. Whatever motives may have been in Eden's mind, beyond receiving Cecil and his collaborators in company with Baldwin and Hoare, and at Hoare's express request, he played no part in the general rejoicings, and was given a hero-lead he never sought.

For most of the next three months he was, as his duties demanded of him, in Geneva; which, until Hitler's silent and sudden invasion of the Rhineland in March 1936, was in fact the capital of world politics. It was a period of feverish activity—feverish is the word. For, in spite of all Eden's exactitude, nothing he did or said maintained a complete relation with reality. It was not his fault; within the sphere of his instructions and initiative he acted with drastic efficiency.

Chapter XVII



ABYSSINIA—TEST CASE

By the end of July the arbitrators in the Abyssinian dispute had made no appreciable headway. Abyssinia claimed that it was the Council's duty to unravel the knots at its forthcoming meeting. Italy made reservations which were duly accepted, and the Italian representative, Baron Aloisi, duly took his place at the Council table. There followed three days of protracted and difficult negotiation, in which Laval and Eden, working closely together, were the dominating personalities. Their work ended in a compromise embodied in a couple of League resolutions and a Three-Power declaration.

On 4th August Eden broadcast from Geneva on the decision of Great Britain, France, and Italy to negotiate direct over the Abyssinian question. The League, he declared, may not prevent all wars, but it gives arbitration a good chance. The dispute, he added, must be settled by 4th September or the consequences would be serious. The Italian press at once attacked this speech, and inferred from it the threat of sanctions.

Britain, through the mouth of Mr. Eden, was accused of 'exasperating the conflict'. Eden's words, delivered with his deep and serious voice that offered comparison with the best of wireless announcers, were not themselves conciliatory. 'You can well imagine,' he said, 'if you have followed the military preparations of Italy, that we have had in our minds graver preoccupations than an isolated frontier incident. We have in fact been meeting under the shadow of a thunder-cloud which, if it were to burst, would have consequences which no one can well foresee'. As for the League resolution: 'There is, of course, no question in all

this of shirking a difficulty, or a mere acquiescence in dilatory manœuvres. On the contrary, we have named a date by which either the negotiations must succeed or else the Council will have to discharge the obligations imposed upon it under the Covenant. I would ask you to note that for the first time in this dispute provision has been made for all aspects of it, and not only the Walwal incident to come before the Council '.

But Eden knew that in spite of this appearance of strength the form of the Three-Power Conference did not represent his personal wishes. He had fought for Abyssinian representation on it, but Aloisi had refused to yield. Nor would Italy agree that talks should take place under the ægis of the League which Eden had also stressed. These were two serious defeats from which all his diplomatic technique could not wholly recover.

The Three-Power Conference convened in Paris on 15th August. Eden arrived on the 13th for talks with Laval and the Abyssinian representative, Teclé Hawariate. When Aloisi arrived he had no instructions to formulate his demand nor would he give any guarantees. Eden and Laval accordingly decided there was nothing for it but for Great Britain and France to produce a plan which Rome could either accept or reject. This plan was at once sent to Rome. Mussolini's reply arrived on the 18th, and was in effect a definite refusal even to discuss the suggestions put forward for consideration. A *communiqué* was issued, and the Conference indefinitely adjourned. With the summary breakdown of the Paris Conference went the last hope of a peaceful settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.

What was the policy of Great Britain and France on and after 4th September? During this crucial fortnight no lead was given either in Paris or London. There was a Cabinet meeting in Downing Street on 22nd August, but the hopes raised by the news that the Prime Minister regarded the situation as sufficiently serious to interrupt his colleagues' holiday

were disappointed by the negative results of their deliberation. We were prepared to do what every one else was prepared to do; it was in fact for Estonia and Ecuador to tell us rather than us to tell Estonia and Ecuador. Collective Security has always roused the British Government to the chivalry of 'After you'. Hoare warned us all against rashness. 'It was easy', he had said on the 1st August, and 'perhaps tempting to jump into the arena impetuously, throw down the glove and challenge anyone who disagreed to fight. Supposing, however, that that attitude would destroy for years the basis of international co-operation; supposing the result of that action would cripple the League for a generation to come'—and Right-Wing Conservatives, like Lord Londonderry, stumped about the country—supposing.

The result was that Eden set out for Paris prior to the fateful meeting of the Council on 4th September with no instructions and the representative of a Government that had simply come to no considered conclusion on the next move. *The Times* had a first leader, 'Mr. Eden Sets Out', and described how his mission was regarded as one requiring 'tact, courage and persistence', but as not being too difficult for his undoubted skill. Hoare was also suitably praised. On the 3rd, Eden dined with Baldwin at Aix—never before had Baldwin been so near to a major European dispute.

The Italo-Ethiopian dispute was first on the agenda, and Eden began the proceedings with his promised report on the breakdown of the Paris talks. 'It was a dramatic scene... Mr. Eden talked cheerfully with M. Litvinov'. Then 'Mr. Eden began his report, reading quietly and gravely before a hushed and crowded audience'.¹ He spoke in cold precise terms. M. Laval followed, putting rather more emphasis on conciliation than the Covenant. Aloisi was next, and presented the Council with a host of new grievances, including the quality of the *régime* in Addis Ababa. Eden's appeal to Italy to use League machinery to settle the dispute was

¹ From *The Times*, 5th September, 1935.

brushed aside. The French advocate, M. Jèze, who most ably represented Abyssinia at Geneva, followed. 'It was,' he declared, 'a dangerous precedent for the League to admit the criticisms of state members about their respective internal régimes. Italy was shifting her ground because the Walwal incident no longer served her purposes: the issue was whether in the next few days a war of extermination would be opened.

The next day, while M. Jèze was continuing his summary of the Ethiopian case and denouncing the Italian Memorandum with the assertion that 'the Italian Government, having resolved to conquer and destroy Ethiopia, begins by giving Ethiopia a bad name', Aloisi rose and left the Council room, and was followed by the second Italian delegate. Jèze at once asked for prompt action under Articles XV and X of the Covenant. This dramatic scene took place in the evening, as the Council did not meet until 7 p.m. During the day Eden and the other delegates had been fully occupied in private discussion. Eden gave a lunch at which his principal guest was Colonel Beck, and Aloisi had already blandly told the Press that Italy 'put Abyssinia beyond the law'.

After intense negotiation a committee of five members was set up to make a general examination and seek a peaceful solution of the dispute. Madariaga was made chairman. The committee held eleven meetings between the 7th and 24th September, and by the 18th had evolved its scheme, but there were developments actually while the committee was sitting which virtually rendered decisions out of date before they had been reached. On 8th September Count Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law) Minister for Press and Propaganda, serving with the Italian Air Force in Africa, declared in an address to the American people that Italy had decided to consider as closed for ever the period of attempts at pacific collaboration with Ethiopia. The next day Hitler greeted the newly appointed Italian Ambassador in Berlin, and ex-

changed addresses which pointedly talked of community of interest between Germany and Italy.

Then on 10th September came Mussolini's famous mass mobilization order, when there was to be a one-day 'general assembly of the forces of the régime'. Church bells were to be rung, sirens hooted, and drums rolled. It was against this atmosphere of menace and bluster and on the same day that M. Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare had a private conversation in Geneva. 'At the time,' comments *The Survey*, 'the Laval-Hoare consultations of 10th September attracted little public attention, since their purport was not divulged and no hint was given of their actual importance; whereas the imagination of the public was caught and captivated by Sir Samuel Hoare's immediately following pronouncement with its apparent promise of wholehearted loyalty to the League Covenant 'on the British Government's part'.

Not until 28th December did Laval divulge what took place on 10th September. Then, speaking in the Chamber of Deputies, he revealed: 'I had some conversations at Geneva with Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden. Conversations about what? . . . We found ourselves instantaneously in agreement upon ruling out military sanctions, not adopting any measure of naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal—in a word, ruling out everything that might lead to war'. Actually this assertion is not wholly accurate, in as far as Sir Samuel Hoare did not commit himself to sanctions nor to the avoidance of sanctions. He kept his hands free; but as *The Survey* justly adds, 'From the practical point of view, it makes little difference whether the owner of a hand which has done no handiwork has allowed a neighbour to tie the passively offending member behind his back, or has himself kept it voluntarily in his pocket'.

Laval's statement, therefore, is in substance accurate; for Anglo-French policy was laid down on 10th September 'in free discussion on an equal footing', and was followed by Flandin after Laval, and by Eden after Hoare 'until the bitter

end of an unchecked war of aggression which reached its military termination seven months after the opening of hostilities, in a complete military victory for the aggressor over his victim'. Eden was present, and Eden consented to these decisions.

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Sir Samuel Hoare's speech on 11th September thrilled the world. 'The League stands,' he said, rapping the desk in front of him, 'and my country stands with it for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression'.

During the month following this speech, which by its double emphasis on collective action begged the very questions it raised, Eden was busily engaged on committee and with the endless round of lobby negotiation. But events once again were moving too fast for him. On 2nd October, the eve of the Italian invasion, Mussolini spoke to the assembled millions of his people: 'Make the shout of your decision fill the heavens and gladden the hearts of the soldiers who are waiting in Africa'. When The Hague Council met on 5th October Eden had no illusions as to the issues at stake. In a letter to his constituents he wrote: 'The issues of the dispute are such as must profoundly interest every one of us. It is not purely a question of a colonial adventure of no real importance, as has been urged in some quarters. It is not a question of the imperialist demand of one Power or another Power in the territory of Abyssinia or elsewhere. It is not even just a question of peace or war in an outlying part of the world. The real issue is whether or not the League of Nations can prove itself an effective instrument in this dispute, and whether its members are prepared to respect and uphold the Covenant. . . . The present dispute is a test case'.

It was this succinct definition of the issue which no doubt was to put Eden beyond the pale with those of Lord

Londonderry's persuasion, and to make him suspect with the more timorous elders in the Cabinet, among whom must be included Simon and Chamberlain, whose support for the League at this time was wrapped round with every possible saving clause. The Committee of Six was appointed, and the Council adopted Eden's urgent resolution that this Committee should 'get to work almost at once to-night'. Its finding was ready within ten days, and it was simply that: 'After an examination of the facts stated above, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its Covenants under Article XII of the Covenant of the League of Nations'.

On 9th October the Assembly met again, and Benes (the President) made a long statement on procedure, envisaging the application of Article XVI, the Sanctions article. The two following days were devoted to a series of full-dress speeches. Interests ranging from those of France to those of Haiti were duly invoked. Eden called for action in the name of humanity. 'Since it is our duty to take action,' he declared, 'it is essential that such action should be prompt. That is the League's responsibility—a responsibility based on humanity: for we cannot forget that war is at this moment actually in progress'.

The League proceeded under Benes's guidance to unfold itself and set up the Co-ordination Committee which, in its turn, set up a sub-committee which has become known to history as the Committee of Eighteen. Both these appointments took place on the 11th, and on the same evening Eden made a dramatic broadcast on sanctions, promising to go through with them, pointing out that the machinery for operating them was ready within a week of the outbreak of war, and ending on a note of Third Party ethic: 'We have no quarrel with Italy'.

Senhor Vasconcellos of Portugal was elected chairman both of the Co-ordination Committee and the Committee of Eighteen. Eden was at once rescuing him and his colleagues

from barren juridical wrangles, and putting before them the one issue which justified their corporate existence. He proposed that the committee should forthwith recommend that the arms embargo (which had already virtually ensured Abyssinia's overthrow) against Abyssinia should be raised and a ban on arms to Italy be imposed. He urged that the list of arms should be based on a list compiled by the United States. The next day he proposed, under the heading of economic measures, a refusal to take imports from Italy. He submitted that 'an embargo by all members of the League on Italian goods would cut off roughly seventy per cent of Italy's export trade'.

M. Motta, of Switzerland, was really worried at the almost sadistic haste with which his colleagues were moving, and suggested a sub-committee to slow down the procedure—the Swiss were really alarmed at the loss of Italian trade. The French delegate put forward his own proposals which he hoped would be given priority to Eden's: Eden once again gave evidence of the mood he was in. 'To be quite frank, I do not believe it is in the least necessary to send my proposals to a technical sub-committee at all; they do not require any technical elaboration whatsoever. What they require is an admittedly very difficult political decision'. Afterwards he relented, with the stipulation that the sub-committee should have approved his own proposal at latest on about 18th October.

The next resolution he carried was that 'the Governments are invited to put in operation at once such of the measures recommended as can be enforced without fresh legislation, and to take all practical steps to secure that the measures recommended are put into operation by 31st October 1935. Within ten days of the Assembly's concurrence with the findings of the League Council, a committee consisting of fifty-two states members of the League, had adopted for recommendation to all the governments—with the exception of the two belligerents and three dissenters—five concrete

proposals which if put into effect would mean that the obligations under Article XVI would have been largely brought into effect. 'Notwithstanding its incompleteness' says *The Survey*,¹ 'this was a remarkable international achievement'.

In assessing the achievement, *The Survey* stresses the *ad hoc* nature of the work, the delegates were breaking wholly new ground. They were demanding unequal burdens from the different states. Four factors are noted as explaining this intensive international co-operation—the acute realization of the price of failure, a precocious gift for technique in the new and rudimentary international society, a militance congenial to the spirit of the times. Eden bore witness to this firm resolve when he advocated the embargo on the acceptance of Italian exports and claimed that 'it is a measure which can be brought into operation immediately in any country where the necessary legislative authority exists. Limitation of imports by quota has unfortunately been only too common for some time past in many countries, and the administration authorities, therefore, would not be undertaking a task to which they were not accustomed'.

Then finally *The Survey* pointed to the 'stimulus which was personal—the personality of Mr. Anthony Eden—for the Italians were as right in believing that Mr. Eden's rôle was important as they were wrong in denouncing it as illegitimate'. The Dictators had shown once again that personal leadership was still as important a factor in public affairs as it had ever been, 'notwithstanding the attempts of nineteenth-century Western philosophers to present human history in impersonal terms as a process of the same kind as the growth of a coral reef or the depositing of a mud bank'. In the post-war era success had been to the Dictators but opportunities for leadership were not confined to dictatorship, they 'existed in democratic states and international associations; and at Geneva in the autumn of 1935 Mr. Eden

¹ See *Survey of International Affairs for 1935*, Vol. I, page 223.

found and seized an opportunity for exercising a democratic leadership. His age told in his favour; for, as a representative of a doubly and trebly decimated generation, he had a rarity value in a world that was still being governed (apart from the dictatorships) by men who had already reached middle-age before 1914. And, in Mr. Eden's case, this fortuitous advantage of belonging to the generation which had borne the brunt of the war of 1914-18, was reinforced by his personal energy, his resourcefulness, and his belief in the policy which he was endeavouring to put into effect. Assuredly the Committee of Eighteen would have accomplished much less than it did accomplish if Mr. Eden had not been serving on it'.

Eden was during this brief hour the hero of the nation. There was a feeling in the five continents that Great Britain had produced a leader who was on more than nodding acquaintance with international action. As a symbol of gratitude for great services rendered to the State and to the world the Leamington Council decided to present him with the freedom of the borough. It was generally believed that he would not be opposed in the general election which was imminent and which had been largely provoked by the magnitude of his personal triumphs following Sir Samuel Hoare's speech.

On 16th October Viscount Snowden, in a fierce attack on the Government at a National Liberal Club luncheon, made a significant exception. 'I think it is only fair', added this master of invective, 'to pay a warm personal tribute to Mr. Eden, who in extremely difficult circumstances has shown great courage and more than ordinary capacity. He has been hampered by the lack of cordial support from his colleagues, especially when dealing with a reluctant French Premier, and the country is really indebted to him for his conduct of affairs thus far'. A few days later the

Egyptian Nile Society added its quota of tribute to Mr. Eden's great struggle against the aggressor.

Then on 28th October Eden received the Freedom of Leamington—a fitting climax to twelve years' unbroken membership of and unstinted service to his constituency. He used the occasion for one of the most eloquent and impressive speeches of his brief career. It was an appeal to youth and to new ideas. 'It is fashionable', he said, 'for politicians to look forward to retirement—to pigs, poultry, and a pot of ale by the hearthside. I promise to allow myself no such indulgence. . . . I am convinced that we are all moving into an era when nations will strive to understand one another'. On the same night he was speaking in Coventry on foreign policy. There were 25,000 applications for the three thousand seats at this meeting. His thesis was that the League had worked as a body—it had created its own momentum—it had not been forced into action by Great Britain. The impressive thing was the virtual unanimity over Sanctions.

The impending election from now on swamped all other political issues. Baldwin was asking for a verdict while the crime was being committed. The British electorate gave Baldwin their support under the impression that he was asking for more police powers. It was essentially a double deception, of which the first and last victim was to be Anthony Eden.

The Labour Party had the temerity to put up a candidate against him in Leamington, adopting a blind member of the Birmingham City Council. It was duly stressed, however, the next day, when Eden was adopted, that the nomination papers showed him to be in receipt of 'influential Liberal support'. His election campaign was little less than a triumphal progress. Stafford Cripps, by offensive references to 'Jubilee ballyhoo', and sinister injunctions as to the necessity for economic crisis to herald the socialist millennium, succeeded in supplying the National

Government with all the propaganda it needed. Eden spoke of the disastrous consequences of returning a Socialist party 'containing men like Sir Stafford Cripps'. He also did his best to refute the contentious Bishop of Birmingham, who had raised again the boggy of Lord Londonderry and air bombing. On the one hand he stressed his belief—as always, based on personal experience—that the League would emerge from the crisis stronger than before, and on the other that there was no security in piling up armaments.

There were rumours that Eden's popularity was not wholly relished in the Cabinet, and that Hoare himself was displeased and even alarmed at the enthusiasm his colleague had aroused. At York, however, on 8th November, Eden declared categorically 'I hate to spoil the stories that some of our friends in the Press have been putting about. But I must say that there has never been on a single occasion the least difference of opinion between the Foreign Secretary and myself'. Indeed, at that very hour an Order in Council prohibiting grants of loans or credits to the Italian Government in addition to the export of arms, showed to the world Great Britain's intention to fulfil her part of the League's recommendation.

The election passed off very quietly. Baldwin's solidity gained the day. The plea of strength without armaments, peace with honour, was apparently irresistible. The National-Conservative majority was reduced, but was still invincible. There had been no Opposition cry beyond the Cassandra warning that the right policy was being pursued by the wrong men. Low caught the Opposition dilemma in his cartoon of Baldwin crossing the Rubicon. 'What is the disposition of the enemy?' asks Baldwin. 'Sire', replies a member of his general staff, 'the enemy is all on our side'.

The new Government, with roughly the same personnel, was immediately at pains to give the lie to these admittedly timid suspicions. On 11th November the Italian Government had sent a note to the British Government protesting against the gross unfairness of imposing sanctions against

Italy. On 22nd November we replied, in tones of self-conscious moral grandeur, that we could not discuss the specific questions raised in the Italian note, pointing out that as we had signed the Covenant we had to accept the consequences.

But the next stage in the Committee of Eighteen's deliberations was the decisive oil sanction, and here came the first signs that the dualism involved in upholding conciliation and the Covenant was weakening our resolve. Laval had asked for a postponement, which according to Hoare made possible a further intensive effort to bring about a peaceful settlement. At the end of November, Mr. Peterson, the Foreign Office expert on Abyssinia, was sent over to Paris, not to discuss oil but to find the formula that would be acceptable at once to the League, Abyssinia, and Italy. After about a fortnight the experts had reached deadlock.

It was then that Sir Samuel Hoare, passing through Paris on his way to Switzerland for a holiday on doctor's orders, was inveigled into a series of conversations with Laval which culminated in the notorious and ill-fated Hoare-Laval Peace Plan. It is only fair to Sir Samuel to point out that he had on more than one occasion hinted that the door was being left open for some such project. The British and French Press assiduously betrayed confidences, and there was somewhere in the French Foreign Office a persistent leakage. It is still too early for the historian to apportion the personal blame for the abysmal humiliation of this plan.

It was more than Hoare's crime—it was Baldwin's blunder. The political inertia and mental confusion of Old Sealed-Lips during this crisis was shocking to behold. There is a legend that the Hoare-Laval Plan arrived on Baldwin's breakfast-table written out in French, which at once led him to the comfortable estimate that it had Sam's approval, and that there was no need for him to wade through it as well. There is poetic licence in this story, but poetic insight as well. The whole tenor of Baldwin's behaviour suggests that he had not

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fully acquainted himself with the implications of Laval's attitude to Mussolini at this decisive moment in the Abyssinian conflict. But the public opinion, which as a political force only emerges, it seems, in spasms of disgust or delight, was outraged, and demanded a scapegoat. The Government Whips were powerless, the Government press did not dare to say a word for it.

The electorate did not express itself by vociferous protest meetings, but everyone looked at everyone else, and raised an eyebrow which conveyed unanimously 'No!'. It had voted to the slogan of a Strong Britain for a Strong League: in both respects this plan to partition Abyssinia by earnestly persuading the Emperor and by sidetracking Geneva was a repudiation of strength. The truth is that the preparations for the Plan were defective and that the psychology of it was bad. It was an affront both to the ideals and to the self-esteem of the British people.

For Eden the dilemma must have been almost intolerable. He was the heir to a throne that had just been taken from under him. Fortunately for the British Government, Mussolini turned the plan down. If he had accepted it, even as a basis for negotiations, it is difficult to see how Baldwin could have survived the taunt. We were spared the indignity, and Baldwin did survive with his prestige torn to tatters. Hoare's personal explanation was full of dignity. If the situation had been *in vacuo*, and the memory of his Geneva speech had not been so near to hand, he might well have ridden the storm. Baldwin's contribution to the debate was disastrous, and the fate of the entire administration was handed over on a platter to Anthony Eden, the man whom everybody now realized had won the election, whose record was beyond reproach.

It was an embarrassing position to be a young hero without any scope for heroics. The very nature of his popularity

was a danger. Already Eden had influential enemies who were doubly jealous that the prestige of Conservatism should be at the mercy of so progressive a Conservative; Hoare would have to be brought back, and Eden would be working with two ex-Foreign Secretaries in the Cabinet, whose support he could not expect and whose example he had to avoid. *The Week*—a clever if dramatic *potpourri* of the open secrets of world politics—was well aware of Eden's dilemma, and referred to a story that Eden had threatened the Government with resignation on the news of the Plan. Cockburn estimated it as being fifty per cent correct. 'When we saw the proposals he did in fact wash his hands of the whole filthy business, and declared his intention to get out. Then he was sent for by the King. It was after that interview on Monday night that he decided to remain after all'.

There is something of human drama in the young Minister, identified not only with the future of an administration but with all the brightest prospects for a new international order, travelling up to Sandringham on a bitter December night to meet the dying King and to receive confirmation, blessing, and perhaps decisive advice from the most experienced statesman of them all. So many had kissed hands, taken away their seals of office from him; so many famous names and causes won, lost, and forgotten. Eden was to be the last of a great company to take office of state under King George V.

Whatever may have been in Eden's mind he had already done something to save the Government from immediate and complete shipwreck. On 10 December he made a statement that the Plan was 'only a basis for settlement' as ordered by the League's Co-ordinating Committee. The published accounts had been seriously mistaken in this respect. According to *The Times* Eden was 'most heartily received', and his speech 'certainly reconciled most of an audience largely disposed to criticism before it began'.

He began the New Year with a message to his constituents

full of great expectations. In spite of bad world conditions the trade outlook for Britain was good. He repeated his forecast made at the General Election that given no major upheaval we should have five years of steady improvement in the life of the British people. On the same day came the announcement that he was to be President of the forthcoming Naval Conference, which at once raised extravagant hopes of lower tonnages and smaller calibres, and prepared the ground for further disillusion.

Then on 17th January he made his first speech as Foreign Secretary at Warwick. The world's Press followed him into the heart of England, the world's public waited eagerly. Eden began well. The speech had shape and sincerity. Indeed the words were so well chosen as to convey the impression of a lecturer allowing himself the luxury of an opinion, rather than of a politician wallowing in special pleas. 'We shall always be arrayed' was his message to Mussolini 'on the side of the collective system against any Government or people who seek by a return to power politics to break up the peace . . . we are seeking to create'. From the outset he emphasized the urgency of friendship with the United States which was to be the keynote of nearly all his numerous definition speeches, and was to make him in terms of American opinion perhaps the most popular and effective of all British Foreign Secretaries.

The Times first leader the next day gave Eden the benefit of its weighty praise, calling this speech the first explicit declaration of policy since the recent 'momentary confusion of purposes' (an audacious euphemism even for the Thunderer!) Mr. Eden had 'given us no heroics, no "gestures", no fireworks, but a settled foundation of sober and rational principle upon which alone a consistent foreign policy can be developed'. Eden had clarified two points about the League's future: first, that member states must be strong enough to convince aggressors that war will not pay, and secondly that the League must allow for 'necessary

changes' so that the causes of war can be removed. 'There will be the warmest approval among his own countrymen for these words of Mr. Eden.' The collective system, *The Times* piously reiterated, was the only way to arms agreement. 'Mr. Eden has replaced British policy more firmly than ever upon a basis of intelligible principle, and put it further than ever beyond the reach of party. He has given an unconditional lead to public opinion which commends itself equally to heart and head.'

All of which was excellent in Warwick and Printing House Square. Paris, though favourable, linked it up with some uneasiness over rumours about German plans in the Rhineland. The situation and the speech alike commanded the advantages of strong Anglo-French collaboration at Geneva. In Berlin it made unpleasant reading. The only reaction *The Times* correspondent noted was 'that it is reasonable to suppose that Germany feels the time has come to bring herself sharply to the notice of a world which has been arranging its affairs without her'. Rome allowed itself to be reassured because it allowed itself to believe that Italy alone was loyal to the principles of the League.

Chapter XVIII



WATCH ON THE RHINE

At the end of January 1936 the nation was paying homage at the coffin of George V. London was full of potentates, and Eden was busy with informal negotiations. During these historic days Eden had talks with King Carol, still under the guidance of Titulescu; King Boris, Flandin, Neurath, van Zeeland, de Kanya of Hungary, and Starhemberg of Austria. For the most part the future of Germany was the principal item on the agenda, although officially it was given out that the conversations were 'purely informative, and limited to a general exchange of views'. It was also given out that Flandin expressed no urgent anxiety about the Rhineland, while Neurath did not have anything to say that was the reverse of reassuring.

However that may be, Eden found the information sufficiently authentic and important to render necessary an immediate audience with Edward VIII in the middle of all his exacting duties. Edward's knowledge of foreign policy was not profound. He was in no sense a student or specialist on the subject, as George VI is, but he took a lively and almost embarrassing interest in all departments of State. It is probably fair to say that his outlook on foreign affairs was a British Legion outlook—a sentiment in favour of Germany as comrades in each other's arms.

The next morning Eden called on Prince Paul at the Duke of Kent's home in an attempt no doubt to make a bid for Yugoslavia's collaboration in the Anglo-French-Soviet *bloc*. Prince Paul had affinities with the Romanovs, and it has sometimes been suspected that his aversion for Red Terrors has been a big factor in Hitler's success in breaking up the

Little Entente. If Eden was the first Minister to fill in the gaps in Anglo-French collaboration, he was also breaking fresh ground when he insisted that if Russia had a part to play in the maintenance of Anglo-French security, Russia should be consulted. Following the interview with Prince Paul, Litvinov was invited to lunch with Eden and Duff-Cooper while the ill-fated Marshal Tukhachevsky was received by Duff-Cooper at the War Office and by Swinton at the Air Ministry.

Tukhachevsky was the only one of Stalin's victims to be shot without any public hearing. He was condemned out of hand for his alleged fascist sympathies, but there are grounds for asserting that he was taking too independent a line in his efforts to strengthen the Franco-Soviet pact by military arrangements with Great Britain, and that the occasion of King George V's funeral had provided him with the pretext for this ill-omened initiative. The talks with Litvinov were described as raising the problems of 'collective and regional security in some of their more pressing aspects'. All the while there was close contact between Litvinov, Eden, and Titulescu—all the while there were the sinister undertones of impending disaster. Neurath was polite, but it was all too evident that Eden had not been given any specific assurances that Germany would respect the demilitarized zone. The tension during February increased. There was an interlude when Eden had official conversations at the Foreign Office with the Sardar Fayz Mohammed Khan of Afghanistan. The Sardar was the world's youngest Foreign Minister, beating Eden by a year, and was able to announce that all was quiet on the North-West Frontier.

The stage was now set for Eden's first statement as Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons in the debate to take place on 24th February. On 19th February he had another audience of King Edward. There were various lengthy forecasts of what he would say, but when the great day arrived he said very little. 'The much-heralded debate,' *The Times*

candidly reported, 'proved somewhat disappointing.' If the Opposition was too shrill and unpractical, Mr. Eden was too general and unexceptional for either side. He said nothing that thrilled his audience, and on the whole his speech was 'of a kind which must be carefully digested before it can do much good'. As the Government had no new pronouncement to make there was some surprise that they had chosen to encourage the debate. Although it was Eden's official *début*, it is noted that he was only applauded with a 'rather perfunctory cheer'. The House was left to guess whether the Government policy was to intensify international action. Eden on the oil-sanction was non-committal. It would only be applied, he said, if it would help to stop the war. The Government was waiting for the experts' report before deciding. In reviewing the international situation, Eden noted many discreditable similarities to 1914. Collective security was our only hope. Once again he stressed that this must not and did not mean encirclement.

Flandin and Laval, looking for any pretext to relegate the Abyssinian war to a tribal disturbance, were pleased with Eden's caution over the oil-sanction. Flandin went so far as to declare that it was better as a threat than as a fact. The French Press, taking up the cue, spoke of Eden's 'moderation and good sense', but were surprised at it because he had always been thought to be 'youthful and rash'. The Germans were pleased with the distinction between collective security and encirclement, as were the Poles, but the Italians were not so confident, and Mussolini allowed stray rumours to spread that Italy would form a *bloc* with Germany, Poland, Austria, and Hungary. Suvich might be going to Budapest to follow up the idea. Democratic opinion, both in America and Scandinavia, was quietly but nevertheless deeply disappointed at the negative and vague terms of the speech.

On 2nd March Eden, in Geneva, tried to clarify British policy by declaring formally that his Majesty's Government were prepared to apply the oil embargo if others would.

Flandin and Laval were reduced to desperate expedients. On 3rd March Eden was agreeing to Flandin's proposal to give the combatants a week to stop hostilities. The League should get to work on the oil-sanction immediately. A week sufficed to provide the pretext to shelve the embarrassing question. On 4th March Eden left Geneva. On the 5th he reported to the Cabinet, stating that he understood that Italy would meet the oil embargo by withdrawing from the League of Nations and from Locarno, and by denunciation of the Franco-Italian military agreement.

By Saturday, 7th March, Hitler's storm-troops had silently—almost timidly—crossed the bridges and retaken the Rhineland. The peril was immediate and overwhelming. It was sprung upon the world, as with most of Hitler's *coups*, in direct contradiction to solemn, gratuitous and recent pledges. All Eden's laborious courage to make Abyssinia the 'test-case' that would impress the power politicians in Berlin was, it seemed, of no avail. The power politicians had not waited to be impressed. So contemptuous were they of armed democracy that, according to reliable English witnesses, the German infantry were not given a single cartridge nor the artillery a single shell. The aircraft had had machine-guns but no ammunition. This humiliating information was not officially available at the time.

The first impression was that Hitler had weighed up all the consequences and accepted the ultimate sanction of war. The *coup* was covered by one of Hitler's passionate lectures to the Reichstag, with all its accompaniment of hoarse yet controlled hysterics. Intimation of its full meaning was conveyed to Eden at 11 a.m. by the courtly German ambassador to London, von Hoesch. Eden's reply to von Hoesch's memorandum was that the British Government would be bound to take a most serious view.

How much in the dark France and Great Britain were as to the real trend of events can be seen from the fact that only the night before the *coup* a big military reception was being

held at the Soviet embassy in Berlin, with nearly all the military attachés unaware of the great decisions that were being taken all around them; while in London Eden had been seeing von Hoesch at the Foreign Office to let him know that the British Government were anxious to conclude a Western air pact.¹ Confronted with the *fait accompli* Eden at once invoked the constitutional remedy by summoning the representatives of the other Locarno Powers. He then motored down to Chequers for consultation with Baldwin, whose effective belief in Eden was counteracted by his persistent reliance on MacDonald and Halifax, the free-lance Cabinet Ministers. These men did not differentiate, with Eden's clarity, Germany's grievance from the method of redressing it.

Sunday was an anxious day. Hitler, in his desire to beat the Press, was choosing week-ends for his biggest news stories. In doing so he made one miscalculation. He was violating one of the oldest of British institutions. The news that statesmen are meeting on a Sunday at once rouses the British people to the gravity of the situation. On this particular Sunday Eden saw the French ambassador twice, and was with Baldwin again, who had returned to London. By 9th March the psychological initiative had been lost. France and Britain kept up the eternal questions—asking each other what the other would do, the one unwilling to supply the other with the necessary lead.

The evening after King George's funeral, Baldwin had given a private dinner-party, at which Flandin and Eden were guests. Flandin had asked about the Rhineland, and Eden's reply was, 'What will the French government do? Until we know that, we cannot usefully discuss the British attitude.' Flandin had noted down for his Cabinet's agenda that a reply must be given to Mr. Eden. It was. Flandin had authority to tell the British Government

¹ At the moment when the Rhineland was being invaded Hitler was telling the Reichstag, 'We have no territorial demands to make in Europe.'

that France was ready to act if Germany carried out her intentions. Eden was told of the statement at Geneva.

Once again a leakage at the Quai d'Orsay precipitated the crisis, for the Wilhelmstrasse knew all about Franco-British intentions in advance, and without authority. The Nazis were alarmed; they had banked on the bickerings of Paris and London over Abyssinia paralysing the *Entente* elsewhere. Eden's activity was dangerous. His paper schemes would have to be forestalled by action.

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When the crisis came Flandin was ready to act. The Locarno signatories met, and Flandin, backed by Paul-Boncour and his indispensable Léger, urged that Hitler was not strong enough for this adventure. If the Locarno Powers would confirm Hitler's aggression, France would take care of the sanctions on their behalf. The delegates were impressed, but advised that in view of the gravity of the situation they would have to refer back to their respective Governments. France, in the meanwhile, could not afford to offend the expressed wish of her Locarno colleagues. Eden further took the occasion to tell Flandin in Paris that Locarno was not enough, that only the League Council had sufficient status to meet the crisis, and that in the interests of calm deliberation the Council should be taken from Geneva and brought over to London. To all these things Flandin agreed.

So it was that by Monday night Eden had succeeded in sterilizing Saturday's Rhineland occupation. As far as Power politics, war, and international action were concerned, he was relying on the League of Nations as on a safety-valve, an instrument to gain time and release pressure.

Eden prefaced his journey to Paris by a well-ordered statement to an anxious House of Commons. He gave essential points of fact and policy. First, that common decisions were to be deferred until after the League Council's meeting on

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the following Friday, secondly, that German action had shaken the confidence of the nations in the trustworthiness of future German promises. Nevertheless, the German proposals were to be studied. A peace structure might be rebuilt on the ruins of peace. There was no reason to suppose that Germany meant hostilities; but, lastly, if she did, Britain would once again stand by France or Belgium. *The Times* first leader called this an admirable statement, and the political correspondent went on to deny some well-founded rumours.

‘It is understood that the suggestion that Lord Halifax should take part in the conversations with the representatives of France, Belgium, and Italy in Paris and thereafter in Geneva, came from Mr. Eden himself, and was warmly approved by his Ministerial colleagues.’ ‘Critics of the Government at Westminster last night’ were suggesting that the Lord Privy Seal was being sent as ‘a restraining influence’ on his colleague, but the fact was that the Foreign Secretary was anxious to have Lord Halifax at his side in his difficult task: according to Madame Tabouis, however, Lord Halifax was at the Quay d’Orsay because the British Cabinet feared that Eden ‘might act recklessly if left to himself’. Whether or no that is the blunt truth, the influence of the free-lance Halifax over foreign affairs was in the ascendant from that day onwards. There was no break in the fundamental dualism of our policy.

On 12th March the Council of the League of Nations took up its residence at St. James’s Palace and the best London hotels. Anthony Eden, at the summit of his prestige, presided over its proceedings and destinies. Eden proposed to the delegates that the German Government should, first, withdraw all but a symbolical number of troops from the zone; secondly, should not increase the number; and, thirdly, should undertake not to fortify the zone at least until the international situation had been regularized.

The crowds gathered, and the delegates waited anxiously.

When the German reply came it was more or less a negative. They were not willing to withdraw, but agreed not to concentrate on the frontier, provided France and Belgium showed similar restraint. The German estimate of the number of their troops was nearly 30,000: the French put it at 90,000. The probable number was about 60,000, but in this atmosphere of recrimination and falsehood constructive negotiation became increasingly difficult. It was pointed out by well-informed observers in Berlin that it was useless to expect Hitler to withdraw, as he was on the eve of an election, and a re-garrisoned Rhineland would have to be the chief plank on the Nazi platform.

While Eden was giving dinner-parties in honour of the Locarno delegates, and the crisis, if still necessitating intense diplomatic activity, had become a discreet and almost surreptitious affair between gentlemen, Hitler was encircling Germany with a militant mysticism. At Munich he cried: 'I go on my way with the assurance of a somnambulist, the way which Providence has sent me.' Then two big parades at Frankfurt and Mainz were suddenly called off, and Hitler unexpectedly left Munich for Berlin.

One reason for this dramatic *volte-face* was that Eden had recommended that Germany be invited to make her contribution to the Locarno talks. As the Powers, by their very procedure, had acquiesced in facts made by Germany alone, it was difficult to ostracize her from international collaboration. Eden's invitation was duly confirmed and delivered. Neurath accepted on two conditions: first, the guarantee of the old equality thesis, and secondly, Hitler's latest peace proposals as the basis of immediate negotiations.

There was a period of complete uncertainty; then, after Eden had exerted the utmost formal and informal pressure on Berlin, the Germans, led by Ribbentrop, arrived. The British public was seeing Eden's arbitration technique in his most important contest and on his home ground. The British public was impressed. The papers were full of Britain's

Architect of Peace. Only one small item of political news marred the Eden epic. It was reported on 17th March that there was a disturbance in Spain in which a number of Fascists and Socialists were killing each other. It aroused no particular comment at the time—war and bloodshed were taken as being a part of Spanish culture.

On 18th March the empty chair at the conference was filled. Ribbentrop, dapper and self-possessed, had arrived. The same men were in fact two bodies: the League Council was an enlarged Locarno Conference. This disposition of diplomatic forces gave Eden scope for warning Germany without unduly ruffling her susceptibilities. To the Council he was able to say frankly that the League must find that a breach of Versailles had been committed. 'It was clear that Hitler did not mean war. Now was the opportunity to rebuild.' The strain of this double diplomacy was great. Duff-Cooper, at a Conservative lunch, assured him that he was sustained by 'an overwhelming feeling of national confidence'.

But it was Mrs. Eden who was able to give the real impression of his ordeal during those dangerous days. No man could have been blessed with a more devoted or efficient helper. To be the wife of a statesman is no sinecure. The demands are constant. When to be noticeable, when to be self-effacing—these are problems, the solutions of which by the Mrs. Edens of this country can make or mar the social and thereby political influence of their husbands. Some wives have taken too much limelight, under the impression that the valour and intellect of the nation should be the choice of a Premier's consort. Others have been content to remain mere spouses, allowing themselves to be caught up only in their knitting. Mrs. Eden has always been the happy medium. Her public appearances have been very rare, but at the height of the Rhineland crisis, as President of the Leamington Conservatives, she put in a timely word on her husband's behalf. He was working at the greatest possible

pressure, she said. 'On Monday he was engaged with the international situation from 10 A.M. to 1 A.M. the next day. On Tuesday his labours lasted without intermission from 10 A.M. to 2 A.M., and on Wednesday from 10 A.M. to 4 A.M. It was the price of fame and responsibility.

On 19th March Ribbentrop stated the German case. It was simply that the Franco-Soviet pact had made Locarno null and void. The next day Eden was reporting to the House his hopes of a world conference. Germany was invited to lay her claim before The Hague Court, and asked not to increase the number of her troops in the zone or to fortify it. Three days later Eden received Ribbentrop, who had brought over a written reply. The delegates were playing for time, were negotiating on lines that were parallel, and accordingly did not intersect. On 25th March Germany was allowed a glimpse of democratic solidarity in the signing of the Anglo-French-American Naval Treaty.

Eden followed it up the next day with one of his most important statements to the House on the nature of British foreign policy. He roused members to an unaccustomed enthusiasm by the impressive dignity of his words. Loud cheers greeted his refusal to be 'the first British Foreign Secretary to go back on a British signature'. Locarno was 'a new label for an old fact', for it remained a vital interest of this country that no hostile forces should cross the French or Belgian frontiers. We were not arbiters but guarantors of Locarno. But our fundamental obligation under Locarno was to seek a peaceful solution—which was the reason Eden gave for his disagreement with the French and Belgian view that sanctions should be imposed against Germany.

The Times first leader was full of praise. 'Mr. Eden's explanation of British policy yesterday was an admirable Parliamentary performance—the best, because the most spontaneous, he has given since he became Foreign Secretary. The argument was careful, vigorous and cogent; and it was

all the stronger for being deliberately defensive. The reception of the speech by the House as a whole was proof that he had reassured public opinion.' *The Times* was happy that the Government did not take a purely 'legalistic' view of treaties.

Germany's reaction was typified by the *Borsen-Zeitung*: 'We hope, Mr. Eden, that we can take you at your word.' Officially, Germany was silent. Hitler was making a 'peace appeal'—in one of Krupps' armament factories—and in doing so struck an uncompromising patriotic note. In Italy it was reported that the speech was received 'with the disapproval turned upon all Mr. Eden's acts and utterances'. He was reproached for ignoring Italy's position as a Locarno signatory, though it would have seemed that he was doing Mussolini a kindness by leaving him out. Beck told Eden personally that Poland was happy about the speech, while the French were 'cordial, even warm'.

March ended with Eden accepting a D.C.L. from Durham University¹ and planning a holiday in Morocco which he had to cancel. April was to be a month of violent and critical activity. On 1st April Ribbentrop handed Eden the German Peace Plan. It was verbose. In substance it amounted to a four-month standstill order. Eden's response showed a certain lack of nerve and in some ways suggested the excessive influence of permanent officials. In his statement to the House acknowledging the German proposals he declared that they contained 'many indications of future policy, all favourably received', but a pause was necessary. During the pause there were to be staff talks between Britain, France, and Belgium. It was a concession to French prestige, but it could not be a repetition of 1914. The opinion of Parliament

¹ Eden's mother, who has made so few intrusions on his public life, was present at the ceremony when impressive tribute was paid to the public services of her son, who by this honour numbers among Durham's famous men. Several weeks later Eden was to receive a similar distinction from his own University, receiving his Doctor's degree at the same time as the celebrated Hungarian cardinal and political adviser, Cardinal Seredi.

and the people was decisive against any loose uncertain arrangement involving *de facto* moral or military commitments.

Eden gave the only assurance open to him. No military action would be taken unless Germany invaded France or Belgium. He asked the House to believe that conciliation had not yet failed. He was sympathetic to Attlee's wise suggestion that all League Powers should be brought into the staff talks. But Eden's dilemma was real. Flandin had desired action.

For Flandin the Rhineland crisis was the decisive moment in post-war Franco-German relations. If France was to give effect to her legal victory, the Rhineland *coup* was likely to be the last occasion on which violation of Versailles could be punished with comparative safety. If this opportunity was lost, France would have to consider a new mode of security—the Little Entente would cease to be an insurance and would rapidly become a liability. Since March 1936 this has always been Flandin's thesis, until by October 1938 we find Flandin watching the rape of Czechoslovakia with ill-concealed complacency as an issue no longer touching French security.

In March 1936 Flandin had weapons to reinforce his thesis when putting it to Eden and the British Government. The Abyssinian war was not going according to Geneva's schedule. If Eden would not help Flandin in the Ruhr, Flandin would not help Eden in the Suez.

By 8th April Eden was back in Geneva, angry and impatient at the delays in conciliation. Five weary weeks had passed since the appeals to the Italian and Abyssinian Governments. Eden concurred in the suggestion that 14th April should be the time-limit. Italy's intentions were still a mystery, until a few hours later it became known that Mussolini was to annihilate the Ethiopian forces. There had been widespread rumours about poison-gas. Eden spoke out: 'The employment by the Italian armies of poison-gas raises the question whether any international conventions are of

any value whatsoever'. Finally, on 10th April, an appeal was sent to Italy—and with mocking correctitude to Abyssinia as well!—not to use poison-gas. So effectively had Laval and the pro-Italian minority in the League put the brakes on procedure that, as *The Times* points out: 'Plain speaking by Mr. Eden was needed to obtain even this gentle reproof of the Italian use of gas'. Eden was fighting a rearguard action. Intense propaganda was needed if the Committee of Thirteen was to make conciliation a reality for Abyssinia, while if the German peace proposals were to have practical meaning they would have to be explained by Hitler in great detail.

Eden was at work on his famous questionnaire. For a few days in the middle of April, Eden and his family were the guests of Sir Philip Sassoon, who has always been an intimate friend. As art connoisseurs and travellers Eden and Sassoon have common interests. Sassoon, though ambitious, is politically a light-weight, but his wealth has brought him influence: and if Eden is the coming man he may yet achieve the status of the Astors with their Cliveden house party.¹

Eden's stay with Sassoon coincided with a fresh Italian Press campaign, which singled out the Foreign Secretary for special condemnation. Italy was 'determined to resist bullying', and disliked Eden's 'individual and overbearing policy'. By 17th April Eden was back in Geneva. French efforts for peace had broken down, and Eden was represented

¹ It should be noted that Eden has a small yet select circle of friends. Partly, this is the outcome of his political consistency, but it is also due to his personal qualities and inclinations. His friendships are durable. He attracts to himself lasting loyalties. Thus we find Lord Cranbourne as a constant supporter, and his political private secretary, Mr. J. P. L. Thomas (M.P. for Hereford), who had already suffered exile with his former chief, Jimmy Thomas, had to undergo the ordeal a second time when Eden resigned. It has meant for him at least the temporary sacrifice of an extremely promising Parliamentary career. The Edens lived in their Chelsea house at Mulberry Walk between 1925-30. In 1930 they moved to 17 Lower Berkeley Street—family property of Mrs. Eden. As Foreign Secretary he needed rather more room and moved again; this time to 17 Fitzhardinge Street. But none of these addresses implied in themselves luxurious entertainment or hospitality on a scale that might have been associated with a Conservative Foreign Secretary.

in the Italian Press as playing a losing game. Eden's reaction was, two days later, to take a firm line at Geneva. Speaking in clear, ringing tones, he said existing sanctions must be maintained and more economic and financial added. The Protocol of 1925 against the use of poison-gas was our charter against extermination. We could not afford to pass over this violation of it. We must stick to the League: the alternative was anarchy.

In some ways this indignation over poison-gas, amply shared as it was by the Council, drew attention from the main sanctions issue. *The Times* speaks of Eden's 'admirable vigour and lucidity', largely because to *The Times* 'vigour' was 'admirable' inasmuch as it consisted merely of lucid talking. Beyond that it was dangerous. Eden it seemed had made a deep impression on the Council, which had only been irritated by Baron Aloisi's bland suggestions that not Italy but Abyssinia had been the aggressor.

At the end of this arduous month Eden was still at work on the questionnaire—though it was announced that he would not be going to Berlin personally—and was at the same time facing an increasingly exasperated House of Commons. He was heavily cross-examined, and was urged to demand stronger sanctions, to withdraw the British Ambassador from Rome, and to propose the expulsion of Italy from the League. Question-time was full of demands for deeds not words. One Labour member protested against what he called 'collective inaction' at Geneva.

During May and June events moved, and Eden with them, to their tragic conclusions. On one day he was telling his constituents that the rapid re-equipment of the three Services was absolutely imperative, on the next he had to give Parliament an account of the Emperor of Abyssinia's flight from Addis Ababa. No sooner had the great laborious questionnaire been put to Hitler than Aloisi startled the world by walking out of the League Council. The questionnaire was Hitler's pretext for taking offence, and shelving the embarras-

sing search for a Peace Plan. The questions, carefully and cleverly framed as they were, in their reference to Hitler's proposals, reduced themselves to one practical issue: Does Germany intend to enter into and keep any treaty in future, or are her past repudiations the precedent on which she will act? It was virtually impossible for Hitler to give a frank reply to this, or even to admit the need to do so. Peace would have to await a bigger gesture than Eden's questionnaire before it would re-enter the deserted halls of Europe.

On 21st May Eden saw the King again; it was rumoured, in an effort to get him to receive the exiled Haile Selassie. Mr. Compton Mackenzie, in a painstaking attempt to attribute to Edward VIII a political importance he did not have time to attain, goes so far as to claim that Edward, by his refusal to fall in with Eden's wishes, helped to keep the peace in spite of his Foreign Secretary. Such an interpretation is, of course, grotesque. It is possible, no doubt, that Eden would have liked royal sympathy for the Emperor's dilemma, so largely the outcome of his faith in Britain's word and intentions—royal recognition for the cause Haile Selassie still represented; but it was never an issue of primary importance. It was Eden's constitutional duty to keep his King informed of the international situation. The King was a restless man who liked to think he was in the know. As for Haile Selassie, peace and war did not depend on the etiquette surrounding kings in exile. Eden called on him in due course and spent twenty minutes with him, during which time the Emperor pathetically thanked him for all that he had done in the Ethiopian cause. There was, however, no discussion of opinions on the general Abyssinian situation.

Eden had done his best to relieve the pathos, and had donned a grey top-hat: but black would have been more becoming. The previous week he had received Grandi at the Foreign Office, and during an informal talk was believed to have discussed possible improvements in the present relations of Italy with other League Powers still imposing sanctions.

Grandi expressed the Duce's desire for a better understanding with Italy, who had no designs on British interests. Mussolini could never be made to understand that this appeal was not in itself enough. For Eden obligation and interest alike were collective or nothing.

Chapter XIX



PLATFORM SANCTIONS

WITHIN two months the world was to know, in an atmosphere of bitter indignation and taunt, that the interest was not collective and that Eden was confounded. Speaking at Windsor in June, Baldwin was praising his Foreign Secretary as 'a man of great ideals and a man of great courage. He has been accused of throwing over all he has believed in. He has thrown over nothing'.

But a few days before what appeared to be a very powerful intrigue against Eden had come to a head with a remarkable speech by Neville Chamberlain at the 1900 Club. The Chancellor of the Exchequer crossed over the frontiers of the Treasury and committed an act of unprovoked aggression on Eden and the Foreign Office. In what was, for him, an unusually flamboyant and vigorous phrase, he associated sanctions with 'midsummer madness'.

Chamberlain's dramatic, almost insolent incursion into foreign affairs caused an immediate sensation. In spite of his attempt to sabotage Stresa, Chamberlain was reported to have a keen appreciation of Eden's diplomatic success—his idealism reinforced by his clarity and administrative competence. At a much later date than this we find Eden telling some of his Opposition friends that although they were scoring good debating points by contrasting his approach to peace with that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, they would probably like to know the facts—which were that among his senior colleagues he had no more loyal supporter during all the dreary disputes over aggression in Abyssinia and non-intervention in Spain than Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

The 'midsummer madness' speech, it would seem, was more a *ballon d'essai* on behalf of the Cabinet as a whole than

the outcome of any deep personal conviction, and in that experimental form it produced an almost unanimously favourable press. Only the *Yorkshire Post*, naturally, and *The Times*, surprisingly, were with Eden. Baldwin himself, when pressed in the House, 'made no complaint of what Mr. Chamberlain had said'.

This ambiguity could not be sustained. The Government obviously had no intention of sustaining it. In May Sir Austen Chamberlain, the fiercest critic of the Hoare-Laval proposals, became the stern opponent of the ineffective sanctions. The Tory back-benchers applauded him for saying what they all felt but had lacked the courage to say for themselves. Sir Austen may well have felt that his own *volte-face* would make Eden's position easier; but nothing could be done to save the Foreign Secretary the devastation of repudiating the policy by which he had stood before the world. On 18th June a crowded and expectant House heard what was in essence the most humiliating personal rebuff of all. Eden showed remarkable debating skill in conducting his retreat. But he spoke in a toneless voice and without conviction. The knight-errantry was over: his was the speech of a man stunned into indifference.

It is a mystery to many why he did not choose this occasion to resign. If he had done so, it is argued, he could have rallied the votes and fortunes of an enthusiastic Opposition. This argument is largely Opposition wish-fulfilment. If Eden had resigned, it is doubtful whether he would have tried to rally anyone to his own position. Eden is a loyal Conservative: it is doubtful whether at any time he would have allowed his resignation to do more than work out its own consequences. Gunther's view is that he stayed out of loyalty to Baldwin: which is plausible. Quite apart from his desires in the matter of an Opposition crusade centred round himself, he may well have been sceptical of the Opposition's power to sustain it; whereas to bump the Tory machine was dangerous, even for a Foreign Secretary. Moreover, these

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were serious times, and to be chastened—even chastized—and in office, was in terms of defending great causes more effective than to be rigidly righteous and out. In both cases Lethe was potent.

The line he took was that sanctions had failed in their original objective. They could no longer restore the position in Abyssinia, short of military action. No member state of the League was prepared to take military action. But to maintain sanctions without any definite objective might operate against the League itself and break down the impressive unanimity of the Powers. For the sake, therefore, of the League, and in the interest of collective action, Britain would at the next meeting of the Council propose the dropping of the existing sanctions against Italy. Whatever the League decision, Great Britain would accept it loyally. In September he would be putting forward more ambitious proposals to place collective action on a more satisfactory basis. Assurances to certain states in the event of an unprovoked attack on them by Italy would be renewed, while our Mediterranean forces would be permanently strengthened.

The debate which followed was of a greater valour than discretion. Labour, sincere as always, overstated its case. It was Lloyd George who produced the *tour de force*—perhaps his finest effort since the war—which tore Mr. Eden's speech to pieces. Eden had spoken of the well-ordered ranks of the League, but it was Eden who was going to Geneva to break them. 'In all my experience,' he cried 'I have never heard a British Minister speaking on behalf of the Government come down to the House of Commons and say that Britain is beaten, that she cannot go on'. Yet that was what Eden was doing. In some ways it was fortunate that the brilliance came from Lloyd George—a personal onslaught which diverted attention from the full force of party reactions.

On 1st July at the League Assembly, with the Government's 'infinite regrets', he drank the cup of bitterness to the dregs.

Eden never did anything to placate the Press that was likely to be hostile to him. There was already a large number of imaginative journalists eagerly prophesying his early downfall. It was good news value to identify the hated League of Nations with a hated personality. As far back as April the *Daily Mail* was forecasting Eden's removal in favour of Halifax. Another paper did its best to send him to Hollywood, circulating rumours of a lucrative film contract. A big director had apparently 'discovered' him, and had sensed a great future for him as Clive Brook's double! But not only at home was the destructive element at work. The military significance of Geneva was melting away. Its political prestige was in cold storage. Even its moral authority was mocked.

The Nazis were giving trouble in Danzig, and in the last resort the responsibility for order rested with the League. Eden presided when Danzig was on the Council's agenda. The various interested parties stated their case. Then Dr. Greiser, the Nazi President of the Danzig Senate, proceeded to make an outrageous speech, full of violence and bravado. At the end of it all he clicked both heels together and gave Eden and Beck the Nazi salute. There was loud laughter in the Press Gallery, at which Greiser turned towards the gallery and, in *Times* language, 'cocked a snook'. There was immediate and prolonged uproar, which was only quelled by Eden, who said he had not seen the incident but thought it became everyone's dignity to take no notice. It was a triviality, perhaps, but it symbolized in the minds of many the sort of treatment those who believed in third party judgment might expect from Nazis and others whose political philosophy extended from the neck downwards.

In the middle of July Eden took a well-deserved rest from the hateful sequence of crisis and disillusion. But even his holiday was suspect. Rumours had been spread about that

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he had been forced to take it because of Hitler's failure to deliver a reply to the questionnaire. It was felt that he might do so if Eden was out of the way! But no sooner had Eden left Geneva, Parliament, and the Foreign Office to their own resources than the ever-increasing tension in Spain turned from a few spasmodic clashes into a civil war. The plans had been deeply laid. General Sanjurgo, condemned and reprieved by the Republican Government for previous sedition, had been in Berlin collecting advice and material for months. On 18th July the revolt began. The aeroplane taking Sanjurgo from Lisbon to Seville crashed, killing all the occupants. The revolt was at once taken over by General Franco, the man who had butchered the Asturian miners on the Spanish Government's behalf, and who had walked through the streets of London as the Spanish Government's representative at King George V's funeral. The plague of war was one stage nearer home. Eden was entering on his greatest ordeal.

The session had ended in July with a broad survey from Eden. There were minor successes to report: the Montreux Conference, which re-militarized the Dardanelles, was in Eden's estimate a valuable example to Europe of how peaceful and legal methods could lead to a settlement more favourable all round than unilateral repudiations. Freedom of passage through the straits in peace time and the international character of the Black Sea had been maintained, while a sentimental link between Turkey and Great Britain was forged by Turkey's offer to take care of the British war graves in Gallipoli. Italy had declared her peaceful intentions towards the states Great Britain had guaranteed. So Eden was able to withdraw the guarantee. He used the occasion to deny two rumours—first, that we had asked the French Government not to sell arms to the Spanish Government, and secondly, that the Gibraltar authorities had refused supplies to the Spanish Government fleet.

In August he signed the Anglo-Egyptian alliance treaty,

over the details of which he had exercised a close supervision. It was a generous and statesmanlike solution to a number of political and administrative misunderstandings, which had been rankling both in Cairo and London over a period of sixteen years.

During the second part of 1936 Eden did something to restore his damaged prestige. In fact, he was only marking time, but to the progressives it seemed he was in readiness for a fresh advance. In the first place the arrival of M. Blum and the Popular Front opened up to Eden the possibility of real collaboration with France.¹ The Laval-Flandin period had involved constant pressure from both sides to achieve even the semblance of unity. At the end Eden was simply waiting for Blum. But before Blum had time to look round the Spanish conflict was creating a wholly new frontier and security problem for France. Out of this dilemma Eden and Blum brought forth Non-Intervention in Spain. In terms of diplomacy the move was astute and well-timed, although in one respect the British attitude was undermined. In all the deliberations of the Non-Intervention Committee the British Government alone was officially committed to a policy of Non-Intervention in advance. We lacked an essential bargaining weapon during the weary weeks of the committee's deliberations. Maisky, Grandi, and Ribbentrop could always add the sanction that unless their views were given full weight they would have to consult their Governments. It was known that the British Government had been consulted and had given its word already.

There is some reason to believe that Eden subsequently recognized that we committed a grave tactical blunder, but only when it was far too late to repair it. The immediate

¹ It should be noted that Eden and Blum soon found that they had other than purely political affinities. It is recorded that at a time of grave crisis in the Spanish situation, when the ministers were behind locked doors and supposed to be in anxious deliberation, they were in fact carefully dissecting the varied qualities of a Proust novel. For Blum and Eden alike Proust was a formative intellectual influence.

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purpose of Non-Intervention—to confine the area of the war to Spain—was achieved; but only at the cost of intensifying hostilities in Spain itself. By the end of 1936 Blum's and Eden's Non-Intervention was a European success but a Spanish tragedy. For Eden the emphasis was primarily European. On 29th October in a debate specifically on the Spanish situation, his first rhetorical question was: 'Would anyone deny that the policy of Non-Intervention was the one most likely to keep peace in Europe?' Then again, in his famous Leamington speech of 20th November, the basic 'duties' in British policy towards Spain were first, to do all we could in the humanitarian sphere to limit suffering, and secondly, 'to see to it that the conflict itself does not spread beyond the confines of Spain'.

However, both these objectives were thwarted by the ideological nature of the conflict. Though springing from purely Spanish causes, it was soon identified with the Fascist and Communist aims. Mussolini and Hitler saw in it an admirable opportunity to strengthen their strategic position in the world, and Spain became a factor in their growing friendship. In July Hitler concluded a pact with Schuschnigg, Germany recognizing the 'full sovereignty' of Austria and in no way disturbing the tripartite agreement of 1934—confirmed in 1936—between Italy, Austria, and Hungary. This settlement made possible a relaxation of tension on the Brenner, but Hitler went farther, and turned his moral approval of the Duce's Abyssinian adventure into positive recognition of the conquest.

Spain, to begin with, allowed a new field of enterprise for what was soon to be known as the Berlin-Rome axis. In July Eden and Blum made a last attempt to revive the ghost of Locarno by issuing an immediate invitation to the German and Italian Governments to take part in a proposed meeting of all five Locarno Powers. The objective was to destroy divisions in Europe and attain a general settlement. But the gesture was no recompense for the prospect of remunerative

aggression. Eden's resolve to keep Spain out of Europe could not match Hitler's and Mussolini's resolve to bring it in with volunteers.

For Eden there was in a steadily deteriorating situation little to do but to clarify British policy, both as an immediate warning to the Dictators and for their future reference. Between September and December he delivered five major speeches, all of them attempts to reach the essentials of our moral and military commitments.

To the League Assembly on 25th September he proclaimed League reform and gave detailed suggestions. 'Machinery should be devised as early as possible to improve the working of the first paragraph of Article XI of the Covenant.' In other words the article that deals with war or the threat of war should not automatically be a matter of concern to the whole League. The Council had been hampered by the rule of unanimity. Should it not in future have more freedom to make recommendations without necessarily having the consent of the parties? The danger in delay was properly stressed. Eden no doubt recalled the appalling procedure in the Manchurian dispute, which allowed whole months to be wasted in formal argument between the Chinese and Japanese spokesmen. 'Delay too often means', Eden observed, 'that one or both sides have taken military preparations which it is difficult to revoke, and it would very materially serve the cause of peace if both parties to a dispute knew where they stood.'—'In the view of his Majesty's Government regional pacts can be devised to strengthen the application of the Covenant'. Further than that: 'his Majesty's Government are resolved to negotiate such a pact for Western Europe.' International trade is an aid to international peace. Eden was prepared to take on where his predecessors had left off and discuss access to certain raw materials under League auspices. As for disarm-

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ment: 'Not only weapons but war mentality must be laid aside'.

The autumn had seen the dramatic collaboration of three great democracies to produce currency stabilization. The world was given an example of democratic strength which the dictatorships could not equal but could only imitate. Mussolini had identified in letters of stone the lira with the gold standard. Within forty-eight hours he had to submit to the initiative of the Paris-London-New York axis.

Germany, said Eden in an impressive debate on the address on 5th November, was invited to co-operate in an effort to secure an increase in the volume of world trade on the lines indicated in the recent Three-Power Currency Declaration; but 'we could not accept the doctrine proclaimed in Germany of our responsibility for her economic difficulties'. It was not in accordance with the facts. We had lent Germany since the war almost as much as we had received from her by way of reparations. Under the Anglo-German payments agreement we were buying £100 worth of goods from Germany for every £55 worth of our goods that she was buying—thus leaving £45 at the disposal of Germany for the purpose of buying raw materials and foodstuffs and for meeting her financial obligations. Mussolini had made his famous distinction between the Mediterranean as *via* for Great Britain and *vita* for Italy. Eden's reply was that it was no 'short cut' for us, but 'a main arterial road—a vital interest, in a full sense of the word, to the British Commonwealth of Nations'.

On 12th November Baldwin perpetrated his 'appalling frankness' speech in reply to a philippic from Churchill on armament deficiencies. Baldwin's defence was that he had realized this all the time, but had concealed his knowledge lest he and his party should be defeated in the election.

Those who were in close touch with Baldwin regarded this disastrous speech as astute parliamentary tactics; and, indeed, well-timed apology in politics often pays a handsome dividend. In Baldwin's case it had hardened into a habit, and

as far as European opinion was concerned this latest effort was merely more grist for the Gayda and the Goebbels, while at home there was widespread alarm at such brazen 'Plazatoryism'. Two days later Hitler issued a note denouncing the Navigation Clauses of Versailles, and Eden was forced once more to intensify the general irritation and alarm by taking 'a serious view' of the action and offering no remedy for it.

In this context Eden's great speech at Leamington on 20th November served a double purpose—of restoring British prestige in Europe, and Conservative prestige in Britain. Its fundamental importance rests in its style. The immediate contrast was with the formlessness of Baldwin's ideas and expression. Here was a younger Conservative who, even if he lacked the political resource to carry out his policy, yet all the same knew under precise headings just what he wanted. The Leamington speech gave the appearance of order to a foreign policy that was lapsing into chaos from the mere desire of the Cabinet to sit rather than to sit and think.

Eden first of all concerned himself with the rival forms of government which it seemed were gnawing at sanity in international relationships. It was our duty to recall the objectives we had before us during the last war. They were: 'Freedom and democracy at home. Peace abroad. Such should still be our objectives to-day'. We are opposed to the formation of *blocs*. This was the basis of a *communiqué* agreed to between Beck and Eden following a recent visit to England by the Polish Foreign Minister. 'We mean we do not want to divide the world into democracies and dictatorships'. It would be a tragedy if the League of Nations were to become the home of any ideology except the ideology of peace. 'All that we in this country require and expect is that the rule of law should govern international relations and not the rule of War'. In spite of defections the League was still the best system yet devised. It was now less effective than a

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universal league, 'but the fact that we know that we cannot do everything is no excuse for doing nothing'. We must, however, in present conditions, be doubly strong in order to be just. Then to the basis of the policy.

'But, it may be asked, for what purpose will these arms be used? Let me once again make the position in this respect perfectly clear. These arms will never be used in a war of aggression. They will never be used for a purpose inconsistent with the Covenant of the League or the Pact of Paris. They may, and if the occasion arose they would, be used in our defence and in defence of the territories of the British Commonwealth of Nations. They may, and if the occasion arose they would, be used in the defence of France and Belgium against unprovoked aggression in accordance with our existing obligations. They may, and, if a new Western European settlement can be reached, they would, be used in defence of Germany were she the victim of unprovoked aggression by any of the other signatories of such a settlement. Those, together with our Treaty of Alliance with Iraq and our projected treaty with Egypt, are our definite obligations. In addition our armaments may be used in bringing help to a victim of aggression in any case, where, in our judgment, it would be proper under the provisions of the Covenant to do so. I use the word "*may*" deliberately since in such an instance there is no automatic obligation to take military action. It is, moreover, right that this should be so, for nations cannot be expected to incur automatic military obligations save for areas where their vital interests are concerned.'

The last sentence of this historic definition shows clearly that the Government had drawn no ultimate moral from the Abyssinian fiasco: the emphasis here was more on the British *League* of Nations than on the French *Société* des Nations, a League in which national sovereignty and self-interest in

the last resort overrode the demands of a society greater in political and legal content than the sum of the States composing it. Eden has left the way open to advance and retreat. In the divergence between himself and Neville Chamberlain both men might look at this Leamington speech for vindication. Eden still harped on Locarno, and still hoped to replace it with a fresh settlement. This work he called 'confidential and diplomatic negotiations for repairing the damaged structure of European security', describing it in addition as 'a more immediate issue', but the full relation of the Locarno to the League system he did not elaborate.

Three days later, in a speech at an International Chamber of Commerce luncheon in honour of the young Belgian Premier and economist, M. Van Zeeland, and to the toast of 'the friendship of nations coupled with our friendship for Belgium', he claimed that there is no greater service by our country to the cause of peace than clarity. 'Let me, therefore, on this Anglo-Belgian occasion, once again affirm that the independence and integrity of Belgium is a vital interest for this nation, and that Belgium could count upon our help were she ever the victim of unprovoked aggression'. But over and above this mighty guarantee, 'we share also the same conceptions of international order; a renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy; a willingness to settle disputes by peaceful means; the acceptance of certain agreed canons of international law. But let there be no mistake, those conceptions are tokens neither of softness nor of cowardice. We believe them to be tokens of civilization the nations must choose'.

He then spoke of the heavy cost of a return to the arbitrament of the sword, and said this was no excuse for a repetition of past errors. To-day we had the supreme advantage that the experience of 1914-18 lay behind us. 'The statesmen of the world must know the Nemesis that awaits them and their countries if war is ever again loosed upon the earth. Is there, then, no alternative? Surely there is. It

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is a universal realization that the arbitrament of brute force belongs to the animal creation, and that the whole effort of civilization should be to raise ourselves above the level of the beasts'.

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The nine-days' wonder of the Abdication intervened between this occasion and Eden's Bradford speech. The emergence of Mrs. Simpson temporarily swamped international perplexities. King, Country, and Cabinet were involved in the biggest human drama of the age. The influence of Mrs. Simpson on foreign affairs had been negligible. The 'set' condemned by the Archbishop of Canterbury consisted roughly of the same personnel that was constantly to be found accepting lavish hospitality of Ribbentrop, the new Nazi Ambassador. But it was Hitler's misfortune that Ribbentrop was altogether too stupid to understand the subtleties of British political intrigue and influence.

As for the Abdication crisis itself, it showed the world the essential resiliency of our constitution, and rescued Baldwin from his indolent and inept domestic and foreign policy. Eden's speech at Bradford reflects a reinforced confidence. 'Time was when the broad lines of this country's foreign policy were not the subject of party controversy. I believe that to-day we are making progress towards a return to such conditions, despite differences of emphasis and detail. An impartial observer must have been impressed by the steady growth during the last few months of united opinion on vital matters of foreign policy'. But if the Government was to preserve national unity it must take the country into its confidence.

'The electors must have plain truths in plain language so that there can be no misunderstanding between us. I have spoken of the value to Europe of this country's calm. By that I mean a calm based not upon ignorance of the facts which

might be dangerous, but calm due to a full knowledge and understanding of the position'. Then, after a further appeal that man should avoid the crude alternatives of dictatorship to the Right and Left, he referred to the 'observance of treaties and willingness to resort to free negotiation in case of disagreement' as constituting together the only true basis of international confidence.

'Admittedly, treaties in themselves,' he added, 'which are made by human hands, are not sacrosanct. They are capable of improvement as are all human beings, but there must be some sanctity about the observance of solemn undertakings. There must be a limit to unilateral denunciations or we shall reach a point where force and force alone is to be the sole arbiter of international relations, and where no treaty will be worth the paper on which it is written. Tearing up a scrap of paper led to the war of 1914. If Europe is to be littered with scraps of paper in 1936 and thereafter, nobody can look ahead with any confidence. I repeat, therefore, that international relations are guided, not by forms of Governments but by the manner in which Governments observe their undertakings'.

The difference that was to develop later between Chamberlain and Eden will thus be seen to be a matter of procedure, elevated by argument and action into a principle. At Bradford Eden asserted that he had nothing to add or subtract from the Leamington definitions:

'Yet if I were to say that Britain's interests in peace are geographically limited, I should be giving a false impression. If our vital interests are situated in certain clearly definable areas our interest in peace is world-wide, and there is a simple reason for this. . . . We cannot disinterest ourselves from this or that part of the world in a vague hope that happenings in that area will not affect us. We must neither mislead others nor be misled ourselves by any of those comfortable doctrines that we can live

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secure in a Western European glass-house. It is for this reason that I have again and again insisted that the foreign policy of our country, with its many and comprehensive interests, must work for a comprehensive settlement.

‘But if this is to be achieved and there is to be an assurance of lasting peace, there must be a reversal of certain tendencies dominating world politics. Too large a part of the world’s wealth is being spent on armaments. States cannot plead poverty that are straining and twisting the whole national economy on rearmament. If the world means to persist in rearmament it will persist in its own impoverishment.

‘The world would act wisely were it to turn from armaments competition to economic co-operation, but Great Britain cannot put her economic financial resources at the disposal of other nations if the only result is to be that those other nations will use our resources to pile up their own armaments.’

On Spain Eden admitted that ‘Non-Intervention has not worked as well as we could have wished. There have been leakages, even grave breaches, in the agreement; but that is no reason for abandoning the principle. Those who advocate its abandonment must face the alternative, and it is immeasurably grave. M. Blum has spoken of his conviction that the Non-Intervention initiative saved a European war last August. Is M. Blum right in that conviction? I for one am certainly not prepared to disagree with him’. If our objective was still to confine the conflict to its narrowest limits, this attitude is in conformity with the deep interest we feel in the maintenance of the integrity of Spain and her possessions. ‘For I need perhaps hardly say that it is a consideration of great moment to us that when Spain emerges from her present troubles that integrity should remain intact and unmenaced from any quarter.’

So to the last warning. ‘There is a spirit of violence abroad

in Europe to-day which bodes ill for the future unless all the restraining and responsible influences in humanity are brought to bear to check it. I believe that our nation, if it exerts its full influence and is prepared to make sacrifices quickly and effectively, to equip itself strongly, can yet render a great service to itself and to others before it is too late.'

The cumulative effect of these speeches was greatly to enhance Eden's reputation in progressive circles and to recapture the confidence of what is loosely called the unattached vote. No post-war Foreign Secretary had produced so many well-ordered and comprehensive statements of policy in such quick succession. In the debate following his first Commons speech as Foreign Secretary, which had at once attracted attention for its first-rate style, McGovern had called him 'a foolscap politician'—an unconscious tribute from the virtuoso of all shades of party opinion to the young man who had dared transcend party to become an expert in the most complex of all the departments of politics.

Nineteen thirty-six had been a year of tribulations. Eden had not emerged unscathed, but in the public mind his youth, his fan-mail appeal, made way for an impression of greater maturity—a deeper voice, perhaps, a more deliberate *tempo*; Gladstonian sentiments, horn-rimmed glasses—an outward appearance, in short, reflecting the burden of a mighty office.

Chapter XX



NYON AND BEYOND

EDEN opened 1937 on the same lofty note struck in his memorable Bradford speech. In a major debate on foreign affairs on 19th January he made a considered appeal for international appeasement, turning in particular to Germany with a plea that that country should forgo its national exclusiveness and co-operate amicably with the rest of the world. It was significant that only five days later—on 24th January—Blum echoed these sentiments in a speech at Lyons; and on the 29th Mr. Chamberlain hinted to Germany that it was within her power now to give Europe a sign of peaceful intentions which would set at rest the uneasy fears of the world.

Eden's speech is well worth pondering to-day. 'We are prepared to co-operate in the common work of political appeasement and economic co-operation. If this work is to succeed it needs the collaboration of all. . . . Not only must the world reduce its expenditure on armaments, which is lowering the standard of life, but it has to learn the ways of economic co-operation so that the standards of life can be raised. . . . We are willing to help towards a further advance along the line of increased economic opportunity, but this should be, in our view, on one condition. Economic collaboration and political appeasement must go hand in hand. If economic and financial accommodation merely result in more armaments and more political disturbance the cause of peace will be hindered rather than helped. On the other hand a new and freer economic and financial collaboration, based upon solid and well-conceived political undertakings, will be a powerful aid towards the establishment of a unity of purpose in Europe. . . . We do not accept that the alternative for

Europe lies between dictatorships of the Right and the Left. We do not accept that democracies are a breeding-ground for Communism. We regard them rather as its antidote'.

These impressive thoughts helped to explain a high-sounding Anglo-Italian declaration concerning freedom of transit through the Mediterranean. After a blank denial that any foreign Power, or pair of foreign Powers, is going to dominate Spain for a generation, to rule its life, to direct its foreign policies, and after a blank assertion that of all the possible outcomes of this civil war that is most unlikely, Eden declared: 'There is no word, no line, no comma, in the declaration which could give any foreign Power the right to intervene in Spain whatever the complexion of the Government in any part of that country.'

The declaration was still-born, but it represented a serious effort on the part of the British and Italian Governments to bring their policies into line with their respective national self-interests. Mussolini's commitments, however, in Spain were too extensive to allow of full understanding with Great Britain, not extensive enough to bring Franco a quick victory. Eden for his part was not prepared to go farther than this declaration to help Mussolini out of the dilemma he had so deliberately prepared for himself. In this firmness were the seeds of Eden's ultimate resignation. Even during this debate, Opposition speakers—in particular, Sir Archibald Sinclair—drew attention to Eden's isolation in the Cabinet.

Turning to Germany, Eden considered whether the present régime could lead to stable conditions. It could do so, he thought, only by taking a full part in the normal life of the world, by reducing its armaments and by agreeing to recognize the rule of law in international relationships.

This speech, which was plainly a firm but friendly gesture to Germany, was received with coldness and with the vituperation natural to the German Press. There was more talk of out-of-date democratic ideology and of poison from Moscow. But it was soon made known that the real answer

Treaty of Versailles; and now the division was accentuated by the dissemination of Bolshevik doctrines among all peoples.

Thus Eden was refuted, as a democratically-minded politician 'moving about in worlds not realized'.

Faced with this unpromising attitude of the Führer, Eden could only reiterate the *communiqué* of July 1936, that negotiations for a new Locarno Pact should include wider problems than the merely Western security pact which Germany wanted in order to be left free for expansion eastwards.

On 6th February he left London for a holiday in the south of France, leaving Lord Cranborne to answer questions in the House on the delicate state of Non-Intervention in Spain; but was back again on 2nd March to justify this laborious diplomatic fiction. He claimed, as he was later to claim in the League Assembly, that Non-Intervention had prevented the spread of war outside the Peninsula. He made no reply to the accusation that if it had done so, it had only been at the cost of benefiting the rebels and denying the legitimate rights of the Spanish Government. Nor is there any reason to believe seriously that Germany and Italy would have actually gone to war for Spain. The danger from which Non-Intervention has saved us has, it seems, been largely imaginary, but it is difficult not to believe Eden's defence of this policy as sincere.

In the same speech he confessed his inability to believe that the League was 'yet entombed'; and hoped still for a European round-table conference.

In a speech at Aberdeen on March 8 his attitude was hardening against the Dictators. We should co-operate first with those who are 'like-minded' and should then 'make every endeavour to extend the areas of co-operation'. This was almost the language of Mr. Attlee; while in his condemnation of armaments as undermining the standard of living of the people, in his emphasis on collaboration with the U.S.A.—'another great stabilizing factor the influence and authority of which was of evident advantage to mankind'—and in his reference to international agreements to promote

trade and intercourse between the nations 'in themselves soothing emollients for international passions' he was taking the Opposition Liberal words out of Sir Archibald Sinclair's mouth. Sir Archibald once again did not hesitate to underline the growing divergence between Eden and his Cabinet colleagues in their public statements at this time. No sooner had Eden stressed the economic causes of war than Neville Chamberlain was declaring from the fastnesses of the Exchequer that 'it is far truer to say that economic difficulties spring from political causes than the other way about. The political correspondent of the *Northern Echo* had already confirmed Sir Archibald's suspicions at this hint in a remarkable article in his paper on February 4.

He describes a campaign which Ribbentrop was conducting in London to influence the Cabinet against Eden. He asserted that the German ambassador had met with no small measure of success. Eden's position as Foreign Secretary 'has been challenged'. 'There is reason to believe that at recent meetings of the Cabinet proposals presented by Mr. Eden have been vetoed, and that the Opposition comes principally from Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Simon.'

One reason given for the hostility to Eden was 'anxiety on the part of certain members of the Government, and a larger number of Conservatives to prevent any growth of Communist sympathy or influence in this country'. The article went on to say that it was uncertain just how far Eden was subject to restraint by his Cabinet colleagues, 'but it is known that he would have preferred to have taken a much stronger and more active course in Spain on a number of occasions'. It also drew attention to the bitterness of Hitler's references to Eden in his Reichstag speech of January 30, couched in terms that were intended to belittle his influence. When Eden referred on a previous occasion to the close relation of economic understanding to political appeasement, the German Press at once claimed that Eden was not speaking for the Cabinet.

The article ended by asserting that 'Ribbentrop will be closely watched. . . . For there is a large body of opinion in the country behind Mr. Eden which would resent any attempt to tie his hands at the price of securing a partial understanding with Germany to the exclusion of a general settlement of outstanding international problems.'

Meanwhile the Non-Intervention Committee provided a non-stop comedy that usually drew a good house at question-time. The Government still either maintained that reports of Italian help were exaggerated, or else argued that there were volunteers on both sides; or else pointed out that Spain could appeal to the League, without adding that if Spain did so (as later Spain did) Great Britain would see to it (as later Great Britain did) that the uncomfortable questions were comfortably shelved. And of course the Government were always watching the situation closely.

The sequence of events was at times unfortunate. Thus in April the Foreign Office received irrefutable evidence of the presence of large numbers of Italian troops in Spain. Five days later Eden said that no reports had recently been received on the landing of any foreign troops in Spain. On 7th April the Spanish Embassy announced that it had confirmation of the landing of 10,000 Italian troops on 22nd-24th March. At Liverpool, five days later, Eden claimed that the policy of Non-Intervention had limited and reduced the flow of foreign intervention in arms and men. He added momentarily that if when the control scheme was in full operation it was still found that intervention was occurring, 'his Majesty's Government would view the situation thus created with the gravest concern'.

Nevertheless, by 19th April, a certain progress had been made, and what success there was was undoubtedly due to the perseverance of Eden and of the British Government in reconciling the opposing views of Russia and of Germany and Italy.

It was Eden who, after the Spanish appeal to the League in

November 1936, had requested the co-operation of the principal powers involved in ending the war. A plan was put forward for supervising imports into Spain, and a new Franco-British note—the 'Christmas appeal'—was sent round urging the prohibition of foreign enlistment and the dispatch of 'volunteers'. The Foreign Office actually wrote again on 9th January making the same urgent representations, and the enlisting of British volunteers was formally announced to be illegal.

In the speech of 19th January Eden had, as we have seen, reviewed the whole situation in detail in the House. But for Portugal, whose 'prestige' was involved, a control scheme on the frontiers would soon after have been in force; but it was not until 19th April that the scheme for patrolling the coasts and frontiers of Spain was put into operation.

The question of blockade, which was raised, was defined by Eden in speeches during April. He made it plain that Britain would not recognize a state of blockade by either party, nor General Franco's claim for a six-mile limit of territorial waters.

By May all seemed comparatively well, and the naval patrol scheme was working. And then occurred a most strange incident—if, indeed, it occurred at all. The German cruiser *Leipzig*, on patrol duty, was, so the crew said, struck by a torpedo—four torpedoes, according to Herr Hitler's indignant speech later. The matter remains a mystery; but its effects were real and momentous. Germany took the affair with a quite ridiculous solemnity, and pompously announced the withdrawal of her fleet from waters where it was the object of 'Red target-practice'. It seemed as though the whole elaborate edifice of control was about to break down. It was only by the laborious and undiscouraged efforts of the Foreign Secretary that new British proposals were put forward, urged upon the reluctant governments, and finally formulated in the British Compromise Plan of 14th July, which linked the two problems of withdrawal and granting

of belligerent rights—in that order. Then in the House of Commons Eden stressed the fact that belligerent rights would be granted conditionally upon the withdrawal of volunteers.

It was at the end of July that Neville Chamberlain, who had taken over the Premiership from Baldwin, immediately after the Coronation and during the Empire Conference made his first important excursion into foreign affairs when he sent a personal letter to Mussolini. The contents of the letter and acknowledgment, both of which were handwritten, have never been disclosed, but Chamberlain was understood to have expressed his desire to overcome present misunderstandings between Britain and Italy and his readiness to undertake more drastic action on British behalf than has been taken heretofore. Baldwin's retirement had meant the end of the happy-go-lucky era. A Cabinet that was disintegrating from lack of internal and external compulsion now found itself under a wholly different command. Ministers had to bring daily reports about their Departments. Clocking-in replaced rolling-up.

Chamberlain's rule in its day-to-day procedure is the nearest approach we have yet made to dictatorship. Actually Chamberlain was only taking advantage of a ready-made system that had been developed during the past twenty years. Sir Maurice Hankey's long and unique career as secretary to the Cabinet, which came to its official end with his retirement in the spring of 1938, had helped to weigh the scales not simply in favour of the Cabinet as against Parliament but also, and this is far more significant, in favour of the Prime Minister as against the Cabinet.

A significant sign of the new leadership was in the abortive effort to make direct contact with Germany by means of a visit from Baron von Neurath. *The Star*, on June 21, announced that negotiations for a Western Pact would start when Hitler's Foreign Minister arrived from Berlin as guest of the British Government. The next day *The Times* let it be known that the visit was postponed. These rumours led

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to a brilliant little effort from one of the most compelling of all contemporary satirists—'Sagittarius' of the *New Statesman*. It was entitled 'Eden put the kettle on . . .', and ran as follows:

Eden, see the table spread,
Chamberlain will take the head,
Greet our long-solicited
Governmental guest!
Foreign Office chefs with care
Gastronomic flights prepare,
All the solid British fare
Nazis can digest!

Meet the Führer's hungry wish,
Hand the Soviet with the fish,
Carve the League up on a dish,
Covenant chopped fine;
Serve what Nazis love to eat—
Sauce Valencia with the meat,
Loans and credits with the sweet,
Mandates with the wine!

What! the guest will not partake?
All in vain we boil and bake?
Has von Neurath stomach ache?
Can't he come to-day? . . .
Well, the food will keep, we find,
Later he may change his mind;
Meantime, till he feels inclined,
Eden, clear away!

Discussion of the British plan continued through July and August with no likelihood of agreement; and then the Spanish problem took a new turn. The increasing attacks on shipping by submarines that were obviously not Spanish roused France to suggest an immediate Mediterranean conference. Italy and Germany might set up a hostile state in Spain across our Imperial communications; might defy all rules of law; but when it came to the point of interference with British trade by sinking British cargoes it was time to act. And when an Italian torpedo was fired at the destroyer

Havoc (which cost more than £300,000 to build), it was time to act quickly.

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The history of the Nyon Conference is well known. It was not without its humour. The nervous susceptibilities of the great totalitarian states with regard to Geneva were soothed by choosing Nyon (a few miles away from the pestilential Palace of the League), as the scene of the conference. Nyon would have become a repetition of the Non-Intervention Conference but for the lucky accident that the coarse accusations of Russia so offended the delicacy of Italy and Germany that they found it impossible to sit at the same table with Bolshevik representatives. And, strangely enough, in their absence the scheme for preventing piracy in the Mediterranean was drawn up and signed in four days. It was signed by nine countries, and it was immediately effective. The piracy disappeared, and all the submarines that for months had been not only making war on neutral shipping but breaking the rules of war, vanished suddenly to the coast of Bohemia, as though Prospero had exercised his might and sent them back to Naples. This is how collective security can work. It worked because there was an honest intention that it should.

In these negotiations Eden had the able assistance of Sir Robert Vansittart and of Admiral Chatfield.

Eden broadcast from Geneva after the conference an account of the successful agreement and made some very plain statements about the piratical affairs of that sea which the Italians call *Mare Nostrum*. It was a question in effect of a 'masked highwayman who does not stop short of even murder. A conference was necessary to mark clearly the horror which must surely be felt by all civilized peoples at the barbarous methods employed in these submarine attacks. Moreover, the size of the Mediterranean and the consequent

extent of the problem made collective deliberation leading to swift collective action imperative.'

He referred to a 'gangster terror of the seas' and to the utter disregard shown by the 'unidentified' submarines for the rules laid down by the Treaty of 1930 and the Protocol of 1936. Against this, the Conference had 'set up in that sea a police force; and if any submarines attempt again to embark on evil courses they will, I hope and believe, receive the punishment they deserve.'

The success of Nyon was galling to the Italians, who vented their annoyance upon Eden himself. 'We seem to be back in the days of Baldwin,' remarked one newspaper, 'when Eden was supreme master of foreign policy. As long as Eden is at the head of the Foreign Office we must be on our guard'.

Unfortunately the miracle of agreement at Nyon did not recur in the Eighteenth Assembly of the League, which met a few days later. The Spanish war had been in slow motion now for fourteen months. But for the great help given by Italy and Germany Franco would have probably begun to lose the war. But these illegal aids had involved the Fascist powers so deeply that it was to them a matter of prestige, and therefore of life and death (of their peoples) that Franco should win; and one of the intervening states, whose identity is no longer—indeed, never was—a secret, had gone to the lengths of piratical sinking of ships in the Mediterranean. A state that could not for a month have withstood the shock of a European war had risked this very danger in order to aid a rebellious general in a foreign country. There could be no clearer example of the appalling cynicism of the Fascist countries and of their dangerous diplomatic game of bluff. They were enabled to succeed because of their sure knowledge that the Conservative Government in England would not, under any provocation, go to the length of war merely in defence of the principle of international law and the sanctity of treaties. They would fight to retain their hold upon the servile blacks of Kenya or Jamaica, but for the highest of

all moral principles they would not risk a single torpedo-boat.

It was Eden's duty at the League Assembly to make this plain to the world without saying so in so many words.

The rest of this disappointing year was spent in wrangles in the Non-Intervention Committee, where, so it seems to the outside observer, Russia, by its vigilance and obstinacy, prevented any fatal concessions to the uncompromising demands of Italy and Germany that Franco should forthwith be granted belligerent rights, and the withdrawal of volunteers be postponed to the Greek (or, ought one to say now, the Italian?) Kalends.

So near did the Committee come to a complete deadlock that even the British Government began to lose its patience, and something like an ultimatum was presented. Eden took the chair at the meetings in October. Under British insistence that intransigence would no longer be tolerated, Italy and Germany wheeled round in favour of the old British plan of July. This apparent change of heart was explained by the Italian press as a real contribution to European solidarity, but it omitted to explain why this same contribution could not have been made in July. Once more it seemed as though a real agreement was about to be concluded; and once more it had been made manifest that the Eden policy of determined adherence to a peaceful ideal, undeterred and unbribed by the opposition of the lawless aggressors, was the only sure hope of a peaceful and righteous solution.

The firmness he had shown at Nyon he showed again at London in the October meetings of the Committee, with the result that at last the Powers actually accepted a scheme for beginning the withdrawal of foreign volunteers. Considering Italy's downright assertion that not a single Italian volunteer would be withdrawn this was no small achievement.

It fell to Eden to review the results of his foreign policy in the House on 1st November. It was an attack upon the critics. They were wrong in saying that Nyon had been a selfish

policy of protection for English ships: all nations had benefited. They were wrong in saying that the League could have opposed Japan after the Manchurian invasion: the League was divided. They were wrong in asserting that the failure of sanctions against Italy was due to British half-heartedness: it was due to a French cordiality not even fifty per cent strong. It was hopeless to expect the League to handle the Spanish question: it was as divided upon Spain as upon China. It was wrong to say that Non-Intervention had benefited the rebels: were the facts known (it is perhaps futile to ask why they were not) it would be found that the Spanish Government had been the gainers. It was incorrect, too, to suggest that a victory for Franco meant an anti-British Spain: 'there were strong forces of trade, of geography, working in another direction.'

He returned in his peroration to his enduring theme. Peace would be impossible until the nations returned to the old ideal of the supremacy of law, and so combined that the force against any potential aggressor was overwhelming. And he went on: 'There is an inclination in diplomacy to-day to threaten, to issue orders from the housetops, to proclaim what is virtually an ultimatum and to call it peace. Such methods will never have any response here. Such orders will never be obeyed by the British public. . . . We are not prepared to stand and deliver at anyone's command. . . . We offer co-operation to all, but will accept dictation from none.' These are the accents that almost raise up on the Treasury Bench the ghost of Palmerston and Victorian self-confidence.

The Non-Intervention Committee has not advanced since Eden's resignation, and this immobility clearly reveals whose was the one impelling force for appeasement in the Spanish tragedy.

By October 1937 Neville Chamberlain was actively domin-

ating the principal offices of State. His amateur interest in foreign affairs had developed into a keen resolve to short-circuit the laborious negotiations of the Foreign Secretary. Unless Eden could show to the Premier and Cabinet that the 'usual diplomatic channels' were clear and open to decisive results, Eden's days were numbered. He was subjected to the sinister criticism of an inner Cabinet that was forming round the Premier. Chamberlain's informal advisers, up-to-date versions of the medieval favourites, were beginning to find Eden's internationalism inconvenient. European settlement—short term if you will—was what was needed to revive our sluggish industry.

Chamberlain for his own part was impressed with the mechanics of dictatorial foreign policy. Their psychology might be at fault—dictators were often at a disadvantage there—but their technique was something that the democracies could not afford to ignore. The other side of the picture was Eden's growing resentment at inspired interference in the daily routine of his office. The events of October helped to intensify these disruptive personal elements. A great speech by President Roosevelt, widely interpreted as a reversal of the Monroe Doctrine, was followed by new atrocities and a widening of the area of hostilities in the Far East. The League Assembly adopted the recommendation of its Far Eastern Advisory Committee to invite the signatories of the Washington Nine-Power Conference 'to initiate the consultations provided for under that treaty'.

On 2nd October an Anglo-French note was addressed to the Italian Government calling for the withdrawal of 'at least a substantial number of volunteers'. Italy, in reply, demanded that the matter should be dealt with by the Non-Intervention Committee. By the 19th deadlock had been reached. On 12th October Germany guaranteed the inviolability of Belgium, and ten days later Ribbentrop, on one of his roving commissions, reached agreement in Rome with Mussolini and the Japanese Ambassador on the outline of

the Anti-Comintern Pact. All these events were in varying degrees challenges to collective security and League action.

Eden's first response was to use a routine Government speech at Llandudno as a serious call to the nations. Our belief in Non-Intervention 'does not mean that we are prepared to acquiesce in dilatory tactics. If the Committee is now unable to make progress, as it was unable to make progress last July, then I fear it is useless to conceal from ourselves the gravity of the situation. . . . I for one should certainly not be prepared to utter criticisms of any nation which, if such conditions continue, felt compelled to resume its freedom of action. . . . We have said more than once that we in this country have no concern with the forms of governments of foreign states. . . . But such toleration must be general, and, if we have no intention to seek to make all States in Europe democratic, so others should not seek to make all states in Europe either Fascist or Communist.'

Then to the particular point, which was aimed perhaps more directly at his Cabinet colleagues than at Hitler and Mussolini: 'I am as anxious as anybody to remove disagreements with Germany and Italy, or any other country, but we must make sure that in trying to improve the situation in one direction it does not deteriorate in another. In such an event our last state might be no better or even worse than the former. We are ready and eager to make new friends, but we will not do that by parting with old ones. . . . We are in a period of storm and challenge when the hope is openly avowed that the variety of international anxieties will prevent effective resistance to unlawful causes in any one sphere. This is dangerous doctrine. No nation will profit by such practices in the end. There will be a Nemesis.'

One paper reveals that the 'Tory sounding-board' had been used on this speech. If that is so, it aroused no enthusiasm in the quarters for which it was intended. Right-Wingers in England were embarrassed by the manner in which the *Entente* was monopolized by Left-Wingers in

France. It was left to Lloyd George to provide the praise. Speaking to his Young Liberals at Carnarvon, he described Eden as a 'first-class chauffeur'. 'He is intelligent, he knows his job, he is skilful, he knows where he would like to go. But no chauffeur, however good he is, can drive if there is an assembly of nervous wrecks behind him, always pulling at his elbow.' Lloyd George had been 'watching the thing, and I can see he is not having his own way in the matter.' Lloyd George gave Eden some paternal advice. It was that he should 'take the course his conscience dictates, boldly, fearlessly, dauntlessly, whatever his colleagues may say, and he will be amazed at the response he will get from every quarter of the land. . . . When will Mr. Eden get tired of being bullied by these men and stand up for what he really believes?' If he does, he will be the biggest man in Great Britain.¹

The sentiments of the Llandudno speech were admirable, but the two questions Lloyd George asked were: 'First, what does he mean; and, second, what does he mean to do?' It would, perhaps, have been wiser to ask Chamberlain these questions. As long as Eden could spellbind the Opposition he served a purpose. And it was Chamberlain who supplied the answers. He sent Eden to Brussels, and in his absence decided to send Halifax to Berlin. The Brussels Conference was the most deplorable fiasco in arbitration that the afflicted post-war world has solemnized. After three weeks of humiliating effort it told the world that a suspension of hostilities in the Far East would be in the best interests not only of China and Japan but of all nations. 'With each day's continuance of the conflict the ultimate solution becomes more difficult.' Wellington Koo's tears were cancelled out by his irony. Nothing

¹ Eden was lucky to receive such unstinted support from Lloyd George, as at about this time he had been responsible for one of his most effective thrusts at his usually redoubtable debating foe by likening him to a certain type of trench-mortar which, when it exploded, caused devastation all round itself but made such havoc that no one could ever follow it up or gain any ground by means of it!



MORNING CONSTITUTIONAL

Eden on his way to the Foreign Office, walking in Hyde Park with his elder son Simon, July, 1937. Behind them is the Foreign Secretary's personal detective.

could be done to save this miserable, inert, procedure from the ridicule of the nations. It should be noted that the *Manchester Guardian* reported on 8th November that Mr. Norman Davis wanted to go a step farther and remind Japan of her undertaking in the Kellogg Pact by saying that no dispute must be settled by resort to force, 'but this proposal provoked something like a panic in certain delegations, which see in it almost a condemnation of aggression. It had therefore to be dropped.'

There are pictures taken during these barren days of an Eden dejected and disillusioned. Soon after the Conference began he retired to bed with a cold, and rumours were spread abroad at once that the indisposition was diplomatic in its origin. The disturbances in Europe made a 'Save China' policy an embarrassment even to consider much less to execute. For Eden the Conference was from every point of view a serious personal reverse. In particular it peeled the skin off Anglo-American collaboration, and Eden was heavily committed to selling its advantages to the Cabinet. It was obvious that to go to Brussels at all was to court disaster.

One London diplomatic correspondent cabled to New York that before leaving Eden actually offered Chamberlain his resignation, and was only after intense pressure persuaded to retract. It was common knowledge that Eden had great objections to the projected Hitler-Halifax conversations. They were hatched before Eden left for Brussels, but the final decisions were taken in his absence. The exact nature of the conversations which took place on 19th November is still a subject for wild surmise. History may reveal that they heralded a decisive reversal of British foreign policy.

The *Manchester Guardian* reported them under six clauses, which were drastic and comprehensive in their content. Germany was to rejoin the League if the Covenant was re-drafted, the Sanctions clauses amended, the League severed

from Versailles and war guilt, minority treaties revised, and Italy's conquest of Abyssinia recognized. Great Britain was asked, according to the same authority, to consent to a reorganization of the Czech state on the model of the Swiss federal system, the Sudetenland being allowed to acquire a status similar to that of a Swiss canton. Thirdly, Great Britain was to refrain from giving the Austrian Government any diplomatic political or military assistance. In return Germany was to shelve the colonial issue for six years, to restore peace in Spain after Great Britain had given *de jure* recognition to Franco, and to mediate in the Far East. The extreme bitterness with which the Nazi press attacked 'this masterpiece of lying reporting' suggests that it was not wholly without foundation. It falls significantly into line with the course of events during 1938, and it symbolizes a deliberate abandonment of Eden's policy on every point. Halifax did not commit himself, and does not seem to have made a particularly good impression on Hitler. The ponderous sincerity that met with a response in Gandhi is not necessarily adapted to evoke enthusiasm in the sombre mystic of Berchtesgaden—who embodies the most complex personal equation since Martin Luther.

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Also it would seem that the proposals were more than the Cabinet could stomach. By the beginning of December Eden's position with his colleagues was described as being 'tremendously strong as the result of Berchtesgaden'. There had been something unsatisfactory about this Chamberlain manoeuvre. It left an unpleasant taste in the mouth, and Chamberlain was never able to explain it or make party capital out of it. The public heard of it all a week before Parliament did.

As early as 10th November the *Evening Standard* was able to tell the world that Halifax would be meeting Hitler. The same paper was apparently in a position, half an hour before

its rivals were admitted to the Foreign Office to collect the news, to state that the withdrawal of volunteers downhill was resolved by Italy's general acceptance of the British plan.

Poliakoff, the journalist to whom the *Evening Standard* accredited its astonishing insight at this time, made his name as a diplomatic correspondent in *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. He then joined up with Beaverbrook, and might perhaps be regarded as representing one of Beaverbrook's most ambitious excursions into the daily manoeuvres of foreign policy. Whether Poliakoff was pledged to the task of removing Eden from the Government it is difficult to say at present, but it seems that between November 1937 and January 1938 his extensive influence and daily journalism did little to assist the Foreign Secretary in his arduous tasks. Poliakoff's *coups* were the sensation of Fleet Street, and his connexions were widely discussed.

The first effort of the *Evening Standard* diplomatic correspondent was on 25th October when he came out with a story that Maisky had been ordered to sabotage the Non-Intervention Committee. 'I understand that instructions have been received by M. Maisky . . . to inform at an opportune moment the Chairman of the Non-Intervention Committee (Lord Plymouth) and Mr. Anthony Eden that Russia no longer considers herself bound by the obligation to contribute to the funds of the Committee.'

On 5th November we were given to understand that 'important Nazi moves are impending in Austria. Their result may be a sudden increase in the grip which the Nazi element already have in Austrian affairs.' London's information apparently was that Ribbentrop's mission to Rome was to ask the Duce's consent to expansion of Nazi influence in the Austrian Government. ' . . . the anti-Communist façade of the Italo-German pact now about to be signed in Rome is a convenient cover for political development in Europe. The position of Dr. Schuschnigg has become increasingly weak

of late. In fact, if Italian support were withdrawn from him, it is unlikely that he could resist the pressure of the Austrian Nazis for a closer agreement with Germany.'

The *Evening Standard's* version of the Hitler-Halifax meeting was given a week before it took place.¹ According to this forecast the Prime Minister asked Eden to prepare during this week-end (13th-14th November) the Government's instructions for Lord Halifax. The indications given here roughly bore out the *Manchester Guardian's* commentary. 'The British Government,' it was reported, 'have information from Berlin that Herr Hitler is ready if he receives the slightest encouragement to offer Britain a ten years' truce on the colonial issue. In return Hitler was to ask Great Britain for a 'free hand' in Central Europe. By 'free hand' Hitler meant that Germany presses for a free election or plebiscite in Austria, and that Germany presents a demand to Czechoslovakia for the immediate recognition of the right of the German minority in that country to administrative autonomy within the State and to cultural unity with the people of the German Reich.' There was the significant comment that 'Herr Hitler believes that a free vote in Austria would mean a Nazi regime in Vienna, and that political autonomy for the Germans in Czechoslovakia would paralyse Russian influences in Prague. He attaches most importance *for the moment*² to the solution of the Austrian problem in a sense favourable to Germany. . . . Herr Hitler will find the British Government are anxious to discover the exact extent and nature of Germany's demands for a lasting settlement of pending issues.' The information about Maisky was all wrong, but the remainder of the prophecy assumes a somewhat sinister significance when lined up with the crowded narrative of Europe in 1938.

Otherwise nothing happened to Eden in public, nor was he responsible for any statement between December 1937 and

¹ Issue of Saturday, November 13th.

² The italics are mine.

February 1938 which could have led the uninstructed layman to suspect that he was being forced into a position that would compel him to resign. The session ended with Eden having briskly rebuffed the inept Socialist opposition's futile attempt to discredit the Government for appointing agents to General Franco. Eden spoke that night with the detachment of a Civil Servant obviously relishing the chance it gave him to confine the issue to one of technical convenience. There was the usual end-of-term debate, and although the Far Eastern situation had gone from bad to worse—Nanking had fallen—Eden was able to point to the growth of a new outlook in the United States—disaster and outrage such as the sinking of the *Panay* had admittedly helped to produce it—but it was a deeper sentiment than that. Anglo-American collaboration would prevail, and further, we were not without friends in Europe.

On 26th January he was addressing the hundredth session of the Council of the League. 'The League, despite its existing limitations, was still the best instrument yet devised for giving effect to the principles of international co-operation.' Wellington Koo, rather nearer the firing-line, however, saw the League as a 'platform for empty platitude and a centre of wordy excuses for inaction.' What mattered more, Neville Chamberlain had reached the same conclusion.

Chapter XXI



NOW OR NEVER

UNTIL a week before his fateful decision, Eden was carrying on as though his future in the Foreign Office was assured. The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* were carrying rumours of a Cabinet split involving Eden, but those who had a reputation for being in closer touch with Cabinet circles scouted the suggestion as symptomatic of Yellow Press inaccuracy. Ronald Cartland, the youngest and most progressive of the Midland Tory M.P.s, had organized a vast demonstration of young Imps for Eden in Birmingham. Cartland is a man of energy and vision. He decided to take a leaf out of the dictators' 'Hints on Successful Propaganda'. The large audience was grouped and seated according to districts. Searchlights played on them and on the speaker.

Eden was in his best collective-security form. 'In any agreements we make to-day there must be no sacrifice of principles and no shirking of responsibilities merely to obtain quick results. . . . It is not by seeking to buy goodwill that peace is made, but on a basis of frank reciprocity with mutual respect.' These brave assertions roused his youthful audience to the most vociferous enthusiasm. Here was the leader of the new Tory Democrats addressing the devoted rank-and-file of the future.

As for the present, Winston Churchill, commenting on the speech in the *Evening Standard* on 17th February, wrote that 'these words may be taken to represent not only the views of the Foreign Secretary but those of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, and consequently of His Majesty's Government and the British Parliament.' Eden's visit to Birmingham coincided with Schuschnigg's to Berchtesgaden. Eden perhaps was encouraged to be bold, being no doubt well

aware of the reception the Austrian Chancellor was receiving. If Poliakov's estimate of Hitler's objectives had substance, Eden and Chamberlain had had two months in which to consider how best to counter the Führer's schemes. At any rate it is obvious that Eden's and Chamberlain's attitude to an Anglo-Italian *s rapprochement* was urgently affected by their advance knowledge of Hitler's resolve to incorporate Austria in the Reich.

On Friday, 18th February, Eden was answering questions for the last time as Foreign Secretary. Atlee asked whether he had any further information regarding the Austrian situation. All Eden could offer was that His Majesty's Government had always taken, and would continue to take, an interest in the Austrian question, not only on its own account but in relation to Central Europe as a whole:

ATLEE: 'If I repeat the question on Monday will the right hon. gentleman have any further information?'

EDEN: 'I certainly hope to be in a position to make a much fuller statement on Monday'

—an interesting example of tragic irony and one that cannot be wholly brushed aside by those who claim that Eden's resignation was premeditated over weeks. In the *Daily Telegraph* of 19th February there was no hint of any serious divergence of views between Chamberlain and Eden. Eden, according to the political correspondent, was expected to submit a detailed report to the Cabinet for its emergency Saturday afternoon meeting. 'The Cabinet will also review Anglo-Italian relations. As a result of Mr. Chamberlain's talks yesterday with Count Grandi, the Italian Ambassador, the Premier's direct communications with Signor Mussolini may be renewed.'

The world was waiting for the latest of Hitler's monologues. He was expected to refer not only to the inner meaning of the great army purge, carried out with his customary finesse and precision at the beginning of the month, but also to his plans for the immediate future. The world was

anxious. The world had to pay close attention to this extraordinary man's neuroses. It was reported that he was in a difficult and intransigent mood.

The *Daily Telegraph* political correspondent understood that the very rare course of summoning a Cabinet on Sunday evening would be avoided, although a Monday morning meeting seemed probable. There was no actual or visible crisis, but opinion in the lobbies was gloomy. The Foreign Affairs Committee, which included about one hundred Government supporters, had met on the Thursday evening, and the burden of its opinion was that the Government should be strongly supported if it decided to adopt a vigorous attitude in dealing with the situation. No formal resolution was passed, but the attitude adopted was conveyed to Ministers. 'Private representations were made in favour of some move which would tend to counter the alarm created in Europe by the Nazi treatment of Austria.'

On the Friday night Chamberlain had been speaking in Birmingham, and Eden in Kenilworth. There was no hint of schism in the Cabinet. *The Times* diplomatic correspondent gave a detailed account of Grandi's visit to Downing Street on Friday morning when he conferred with the Prime Minister and Eden.¹ He had brought no reply from the Italian Government about the control of volunteers. In the earlier talks it had been emphasized that 'the Italian support on this point would make much easier the discussion of Anglo-Italian relations in general'. The correspondent added that 'in the absence of a reply to these particular questions the more general issue of the Anglo-Italian relations was discussed—not simply Abyssinia or the Bari broadcasts, but the whole balance of power in the Mediterranean. It is emphasized that yesterday's conversation should not be expected to produce immediately any

¹ This conversation was described as 'the most important of a series held during the last fortnight between the British Government and Count Grandi.'

startling result. Similar conversations will be conducted early next week, and the ground has to be prepared so that, if continued, they can be conducted with goodwill and with complete agreement in view—not for the striking of ephemeral bargains . . . the latest move in Austria played only a very small part in the conversation.’

On Saturday the Cabinet met, and it sat for nearly three and a half hours. It then adjourned until 3 p.m. on Sunday. The length of the meeting aroused intense curiosity. ‘The principal point at issue’, stated the diplomatic correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, ‘is whether settlement of the problems of the Italian troops in Spain and anti-British propaganda should be made a condition precedent to a full agreement’. Chamberlain and Eden were described as reporting to their colleagues the conversations they had had with Grandi, and as inviting them to decide on the subjects to be included in the projected talks with Italy, and the order in which they were to be discussed. Readers of the *Sunday Times* were left to guess the full significance of this phraseology.

The meeting lasted until 6.15 p.m. Eden then spent a further fifteen minutes with the Prime Minister, leaving with Walter Elliott and W. S. Morrison. Hoare and Kingsley Wood did not leave until 7 p.m. These groupings were a fair symbol of the alignment of forces within the Cabinet. Although Hitler was expected to have finished his speech before the Sunday Cabinet met ‘it is unlikely that its terms will be before the Cabinet’. The *Observer* was a little less reticent. ‘In some quarters the opinion was held, although it could not rest upon any responsible authority, that a difference of view had manifested itself in the Cabinet about the right method to be adopted by British diplomacy in the present crisis. The divergence is represented to be somewhat marked as between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, though the divergence be not necessarily unadjustable.’

On the whole, the impression is not one of conscious suppression of news as before the Abdication, but rather in some

cases clever anticipation on the part of the more sensational papers of a crisis that in fact only gathered and broke in the last forty-eight hours. Indeed, those that were in the know knew nothing until the last moment. This view is borne out in the Londoner's Diary from the *Evening Standard* of Monday, 21st February. This particular gossip column is perhaps the best informed of any in London. 'The crisis became acute very suddenly,' it asserts. 'Its precipitation was, in fact, a surprise to most members of the Cabinet. When they went to the meeting on Saturday they had no idea that Mr. Eden was verging on resignation.' In addition to Morrison and Elliott, Oliver Stanley was cited as giving him support.

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Sunday, 20th February, was a day of intolerable tension. The Hitler speech was long and dull. It lasted three hours, and settled nothing. According to a cynical German diplomatic expert, for the first hour it was statistics supplied by Goering; for the second, invective at the expense of the foreign press by Ribbentrop; for the third, a peroration by Goebbels. As far as the events of that Sunday in London were concerned, his furious attack on Bolshevism, which he coupled with taunts at British statesmen, and in particular Eden, were to have the most immediate effect on his world audience. Eden he accused of being blind to the menace of Communism, and of poisoning international relations by permitting press attacks on Germany and Italy.

The Führer condemned the British Foreign Secretary at 2.30 on a Sunday afternoon. By 7.30 the British Foreign Secretary had resigned. Europe, increasingly alive to the efficacy of blackmail, drew a conclusion from this time sequence, which seems to have made some impression on Chamberlain and his colleagues.

The discussions were still going on when Hitler's speech became available in translation. Gordon Lennox

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reports in the *Daily Telegraph* that Eden was strongly pressed to reconsider his decision. 'On the previous day he had rejected a suggestion that he might ease the situation by retiring on grounds of ill-health, or accept some other office. In the Cabinet various formulæ were advanced as providing a basis for the Anglo-Italian conversations which would be acceptable to him. He explained that these would not meet the point. In addition he doubted whether they would be acceptable in Rome.' On the last version of these proposals drawn up by a small committee of his colleagues he spent an hour in private study in his room at the Foreign Office. During this period the Cabinet adjourned.

Gordon Lennox reveals that earlier in the afternoon Eden confessed to the Cabinet 'his recent realization of the fundamental fact that he no longer possessed the confidence of the Prime Minister or of the majority of his colleagues, but that there was rather a fundamental divergence on the method of conducting discussions with the dictatorship governments. In these circumstances, he felt it was altogether best that he should resign'. Gordon Lennox also asserts that Chamberlain took charge of the last talk with Grandi. In the previous four talks between Eden and Grandi, Eden, with Chamberlain's approval, had stood out for withdrawal before discussion. But 'Chamberlain's personal policy ever since the exchange of notes between himself and Mussolini in July 1937 had been to expedite the establishment of a new Anglo-Italian understanding. . . . Following the increase of Nazi influence in Germany as a result of the Army "purge" of 4th February, the Prime Minister appears to have become increasingly impressed with the urgent necessity of being able to proclaim to the world that Britain and Italy were again united. He felt that if this could be achieved before the present week-end it might have a decisive influence on the tone of the speech Herr Hitler was to deliver.'

Gordon Lennox's information is to the effect that on the Friday 'Grandi had asked for the acceptance in principle of

general negotiations in Rome on all outstanding questions between Italy and Great Britain that night. He asked that Italian participation in the Spanish war should be dealt with by the Non-Intervention Committee. In return he accepted the British formula of withdrawal as determining the point at which belligerent rights should be granted.' The Prime Minister considered this opportunity should be seized. Eden, however, insisted that a matter of principle was raised which must be submitted to the Cabinet.

When Grandi returned for his answer, Chamberlain had to inform him that it must be deferred until a Cabinet decision had been reached. 'At this meeting between the Premier, Mr. Eden, and Count Grandi, it was, I gather, not so clear that Rome would accept the British formula on Spain, this being later made conditional on the Cabinet's approving the whole Italian proposal.' If Grandi actually stiffened his terms on that Friday, Eden's subsequent references to 'now or never' had a particular context. On more general lines, he was vindicated by the attitude adopted by the Italian press, which never ceased to stress the strength of the Berlin-Rome axis.

On that Sunday night the crowds gathered. They were silent and mystified. Photographers were busy. Journalists rushed in and out of No. 10 with that noticeable lack of ceremony or dignity which is their peculiar prerogative. 'Eden and Cranborne so far!' whispered a lobby correspondent to me, who had just come out. He was evidently disappointed. For the clubs had been full of exciting rumours. It was expected that at least half a dozen of the Cabinet would follow Eden into exile (Malcolm MacDonald, Duff-Cooper, and Belisha were mentioned, in addition to the three established rebels, Elliott, Morrison, and Stanley).

At 7.30 there was the awe-inspiring spectacle of Sir John Simon playing chess in the National Liberal Club—so what was supposed to be a second Cabinet, timed for 7.30, was only a meeting of Ministers. It went like wildfire that

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Chamberlain was dealing with the dissenters, and while Sir John impassively moved a pawn, members recalled similar brazen gestures on his part at the height of the General Strike and Abdication crises.

Opposition pundits took fresh hope, and after the seven lean years began to make fantastic forecasts of the Eden Progressives backed by all the best men sweeping the nation by the mere quality of their personnel. But one big reservation I heard that night. 'If only Eden had gone on an issue the people can understand.' Eden's immediate case was too technical for a crusade.

From an Opposition point of view it was idle to expect that Eden would turn a hand to rescue Socialists or Liberals from their plight. It was enough for the Opposition to be able to claim that Eden's departure marked the beginning of the end of National Government. From henceforth it was Tory on its own terms and unashamed. With Eden went the Conservative Party's last concession to the Middle Vote. The logic of facts would henceforth have to suffice for personal representation.

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By Monday morning excitement reached its peak. Eden's letter to Chamberlain was an impressive effort to keep the terms of controversy as wide as possible:

The evidence of the last few days have made plain a difference between us on a decision of great importance in itself and far-reaching in its consequences. I cannot recommend to Parliament a policy with which I am not in agreement. Apart from this, I have become conscious, as I know you have also, of a difference of outlook between us in respect to the international problems of the day, and also as to the methods by which we should seek to resolve them.

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He referred to an 'uneasy partnership' that was not 'in the international interest'.

The Premier's answer was equally resolute in its effort to see the controversy through the other end of the telescope:

MY DEAR ANTHONY,

It is with the most profound regret, shared by all our colleagues, that I have received your intimation of your decision to resign the great office which you have administered with such distinction ever since you occupied it. The regret is all the greater because such differences as have arisen between us in no way concern ultimate ends or the fundamentals of our policy.

The immediate result of these letters was to intensify the mystery. No personal explanation had ever been awaited with more widespread anxiety than that of Anthony Eden, and his downfall was in many ways the supreme moment of his career. He had been taken for granted. For the first time he was not available. For the first time he had decided to swim against the stream of office and promotion.

As the time drew near, the usual laughter preceded high seriousness, and helped to relieve the tension. Sir Philip Sassoon was answering questions when Eden's arrival brought a burst of cheers which drowned the reply he was reading. At last, above the tumult, Sir Philip could be heard declaring: '... another model which I hope may prove more satisfactory'.

Eden's statement struck from the beginning a note of restraint, from which he has never lapsed from that day to this. 'The immediate issue is whether official conversations should be opened in Rome now. It is my conviction that the attitude of the Italian Government to international problems in general and to this country in particular is not yet such as to justify this course. The ground has been in no respect prepared. Propaganda by the Italian Government against this

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country is rife throughout the world. I am myself pledged to this House not to open conversations with Italy until this hostile propaganda ceases'.

But Spain was only an example. The successive breaches of faith on the part of Mussolini were only examples. 'We cannot consider this problem except in relation to the international situation as a whole. The conditions to-day are not the same as they were last July, nor even the same as they were last January. Recent months, recent weeks, recent days have seen the successive violation of international agreements and attempts to secure political decisions by forcible means. We are in the presence of the progressive deterioration of respect for international obligations. It is quite impossible to judge these things in a vacuum. In the light—my judgment may well be wrong—of the present international situation this is a moment for this country to stand firm'.

Eden had said what was expected of him. His experience as well as his conviction lay behind his grave warning to the nation. All that he had worked for was at stake. The vision of an international system based even on the most elementary principles of law and justice was being rushed into the back-ground of world politics.

The House, by its very silence, showed how deeply it was stirred, and let it be known that the import of his words and ideals would not be forgotten in our time.

He did not stand alone. Cranborne, timidly at first, with all the subordination expected of an Under-Secretary, followed, but soon was warming to his work with a conviction that took Members by complete surprise. 'It is no question of delay,' he cried, 'as to the time at which conversations should take place, or the method by which they should be carried on. It is a question of the conditions under which any negotiations between any countries can be carried on at all with any useful results.'

In the lobbies afterwards many thought Cranborne had

made the better case, while rumour got busy assessing the influence exerted in the crisis by the house of Cecil. Eden had been doubtful about the final decision; the words of Cranborne and the will of Viscount Cecil had, it was confidentially reported, tipped the scales in favour of resignation. Once again a concrete legend concealed a symbolic truth.

The Prime Minister replied in his usual staccato—a speech of limited vision, perfunctory technique, but as an experienced Parliamentarian said to me, ‘good House of Commons stuff’. Winston Churchill speaks to the Front Bench and to those who have a taste for epigram; Chamberlain talks to the Back Benches, where wits are, comparatively speaking, dim, and stout, honest homespun meets a ready response. ‘The peace of Europe,’ said Chamberlain—and in the light of the subsequent Austrian and Czech crises, the words are worthy of recall—‘the peace of Europe must depend upon the four major Powers, Germany, Italy, France, and ourselves. . . . If we can bring these four nations into friendly discussion, into a settling of their difficulties, we shall have saved the peace of Europe for a generation.’

In spite of all the drama of the remaining debate, which went on its passionate way until the Tuesday night, a political anticlimax soon set in. The wild rumours of schisms, of Middle Parties, gave way to the steady acquiescence of whipped majorities. Chamberlain was able to say on Tuesday: ‘We must not delude ourselves. We must not try to delude small and weak nations into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression.’ As the words were flashed to the capitals of Europe, consternation, not to say alarm, was the immediate reaction, but to the Conservative majority it was mere realism. A sound sentiment that needed saying. Eden would learn the truth one day when he had gained more experience, murmured the elders of the Carlton Club with quiet satisfaction.

Greenwood thundered, Churchill provided Greek tragedy, Lloyd George sensed provocation and involved himself in

an unpleasant affair of honour with the Prime Minister. There had presumably been some intermediary between 10 Downing Street and the Italian Embassy. Keen journalists extracted from the cupboard the robust skeleton of a distinguished colleague. Lloyd George warned Eden not to be 'too good a boy', and once again as father to son made it clear that people were looking out for a young man of intelligence and ideals to lead them forward. Lloyd George was convinced that Eden had the gift.

At the height of the personal exchanges between Lloyd George and Chamberlain, Eden made a quiet intervention. The specific charge was that a telegram from Grandi arrived on Sunday morning. There was a Cabinet on Sunday afternoon and the telegram was not there. What was the explanation? Chamberlain rose immediately in a tumult of cheers and counter-cheers. 'Unofficially, Count Grandi communicated the contents of the telegram to me on Sunday, and I communicated them to the Cabinet.' At which, Eden rose to clarify the position. The atmosphere was electric. 'At the time of my resignation I had received no official information whatever from the Italian Government. It is true the Prime Minister told me he had received such an intimation. Nothing reached the Foreign Office while I was Foreign Secretary. If it had, of course, it would have made no difference to my decision.' Eden had indirectly made his point. Grandi had been negotiating contrary to accepted custom over the head of the Department to which he was accredited.

How far this action constituted a threat is still unknown, but Eden is confident that when all the facts are revealed his interpretation of events will be upheld.

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The reactions of the world's Press were profuse. Those papers that were not principals in the dispute and were removed by oceans from the troubled scene were, for the most part, pro-Eden. The French Government, People, and Press,

mourned the loss of a friend. Delbos seriously contemplated resignation in sympathy, and *L'Oeuvre* talked of an appeal to Great Britain through Sir Eric Phipps to keep Eden in the Cabinet.

In Berlin and Rome, of course, there was truculent rejoicing. Goering's paper talked about changes in world conditions rather than about changes inside the British Cabinet bringing about the fall of the Foreign Office fortress. Italy saw the downfall of its 'bogy man'.

As for the British press, Rothermere and Beaverbrook duly rejoiced. *The Times* and *Telegraph* were sombrely pro-Chamberlain, and congratulating themselves that there would be no fundamental change in British aims. The *News Chronicle* saluted Eden as the true champion of peace, while the *Daily Herald* saw Chamberlain coming out stark and nakedly on the side of power politics.

For the most part, the foreign and British press that took up Eden's case, linked his downfall with Hitler's speech and Mussolini's policy. Damaging secret instructions were found to have been given by the Duce to the Italian press. As early as 20th February, 1937, he was alleged to have given the order: 'Insist on the eventuality of Eden's leaving the Foreign Office. Have sent from London news of Eden's dismissal.' A fortnight before the resignation the Italian press was inspired by the decision and authority of the Italian Government to say that: 'Our opinion will not change until London's foreign policy ceases to be directed by Mr. Eden. In many speeches and on many occasions he has shown his poisoned attitude of mind towards Italy.'

On the whole, the world's Press understood the issue at stake, but there was an underlying implication that Chamberlain's policy would have to work itself out first before a final reckoning could be made. Further, it was recognized that the general situation was riddled with so many dangers that it was not advisable to linger too long on the personal implications of Eden's departure.

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The friends of Eden demanded that he should be given a further hearing. How far was he the victim of a threat? What were the implications of an Anglo-Italian understanding? On the Saturday he spoke to his constituents at Leamington. There was tremendous enthusiasm. When he entered the Winter Hall with his wife, the whole audience of nearly 2,000 people rose to its feet and cheered him to the echo. A. J. Cummings noted the majority of these present were young men and young women. They had been queuing up for two hours before the meeting began, and many hundreds had to remain outside. First, Eden dealt with the whispering campaign which Sir John Simon in particular, with smooth inaccuracy, had done much to encourage, which was to the effect he had had to resign because his health, and therefore his judgment, had been impaired by the strain of office. 'You can judge for yourself whether I look like a sick man. You shall be my witnesses that there is no shred of truth in that suggestion.' He insisted that the meaning of the communications received from 'a certain foreign Government' on the previous week was 'now or never', and then to his testament. It was with the great democracies that our natural affinities lay.

Cummings' interpretation of the subject as a whole was 'that while it yielded nothing on the immediate issue between Mr. Eden and Mr. Chamberlain, the former Foreign Secretary had scrupulously refrained from saying anything which would seem to widen the breach or deepen the injuries to the National Parties, and that by his omissions he had left open the possibility of his eventual return to the Cabinet.' Conservative officials were determined at all costs to prevent Eden from drifting away from the National Parties. Mr. Spencer Flower, who presided at this meeting, spoke for an anxious Conservative Party when he warned the audience of the danger that political opponents would try to exploit the situation, especially the country's admiration for Mr. Eden, by trying to split the Government.

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'I do not think,' Cummings adds, 'that Mr. Eden has any present intention of moving outside the Party sphere and taking all those larger responsibilities to which Mr. Lloyd George referred. The future was uncertain. None could say what effect the course of events may have on Mr. Eden's approach to politics in the coming months.'

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The riddle is still unsolved. In the tremendous months since that crowded, enthusiastic meeting, Eden looks little more than one of Hitler's minor victims. For 1938 has been the Führer's year. Ten million Germans have been incorporated in the Reich and no blow has been struck. The Cæsar of the bloodless wars has conquered.

For weeks Eden made no statement and no move. He was playing tennis on the Riviera; offers of directorships were being received in batches and being resolutely refused in spite of the considerable financial loss involved in becoming once again a back-bench M.P.

By the time he addressed the famous St. George's Society, Austria was deleted from the map and Schuschnigg on his way to Dachau. Eden used the occasion to speak of the need for a united nation and for his belief in democratic ideals. By the time he was once again talking politics to his constituents in Leamington, the nameless terror of 20th May had passed like a cloud. Eden used the occasion to declare that Britain was not decadent. Immediate interest in what Eden had to say was receding.

He had rejected the obvious challenge and was engaged in what farmers sometimes call a policy of 'double digging', sensing that time was on his side. Baldwin still regarded him as heir to the throne. Baldwin's blue pencil was still available. The procedure was apparently:

1. Stress the need for national unity.

2. Stress the need for Conservatives to produce national unity.
3. Steadily but firmly imply that certain Conservatives stand in the way of national unity.

This procedure was to be reinforced by applying a critical eye not only to the foreign scene but also to the devastations of the Home Front. Eden in the early autumn began a tour of the special areas and trading estates. He is collecting ammunition in order to widen the field of his operations against complacent and inert policy.

In the July 1938 issue of the well-known American quarterly, *Foreign Affairs*, Victor Gordon Lennox, whose diplomatic correspondence has brought him into the closest touch with Eden, went so far as to bring out from the vast store of his inside information a prophecy. 'Probably he is destined to remain out of office for some time to come. He is not likely to accept any new appointment in a Chamberlain Government. But it is inevitable that he will "come again" if only because he is the natural representative of a generation into whose hands control of public affairs must necessarily pass with the normal march of time.'

But Gordon Lennox added a more compelling reason for Eden's return—Lord Baldwin—'still in his retirement a powerful figure in British Conservative circles.' 'Lord Baldwin', Gordon Lennox concludes, 'has rewritten his former political testament which names Sir Samuel Hoare as next Conservative Leader after Neville Chamberlain. The name of Hoare has been erased and that of Anthony Eden has been substituted.'

Finally, those who in the irresistible rush of adverse events would be most ready to ask, 'Stands Eden where he did?' are confronted with only one answer. In spite of all the trappings of personal success and overthrow, Anthony Eden has merely been reinforced in his guiding principles. He still meets opportunism with a modest yet confident alliance of

precept to practice. While constantly on his guard against prevailing shallow optimism, nothing has happened to cast any doubts in his mind that his precepts are good and must ultimately prevail. Thus the overwhelming impressions after his empty visits to the European capitals and leaders in the spring of 1935 is found in his *cri de cœur*: 'What then remains? One solution only. A collective peace system.' When the world had been given over by the spring of 1938 to more raucous real *politik* Eden confidently upheld Nyon as vindicating the triumph of law over piracy, as 'an instance of firm and timely action by this country which contributed to avert the danger of war.' He has never wavered in his estimate of Britain's rôle in the international society, and for Eden be it noted with all his knowledge of continental language and culture, Geneva has always been as much the spiritual home of the Société des Nations as the official headquarters of the League of Nations. It is in terms of his memorable definition during the Commons debate on Spain in November, 1937: 'We offer co-operation to all, but we will accept dictation from none.'

And so, when the greatest crisis of all came in the autumn of 1938, Eden sought safety in the essential consistency of his approach to the problem of peace as a whole. While the world was eagerly awaiting Neville Chamberlain's arrival at Godesberg, Eden was addressing his constituents at Stratford-on-Avon quietly, remorselessly, taking yet again the long-term view. The hope that if war was now somehow averted the crisis would now somehow be over was 'ill-founded'.

More than ever before it was the difference between 'peace at any price' and 'peace at almost any price'. 'Almost' puts a ceiling not only to the price we are prepared to pay, but also to the price we will ultimately have to pay. As for the meaning of 'almost' in terms of the specific issues at stake in the Sudetenland, Eden, on September 12th, put forward 'the salient points in the European situation' as he saw them

in a short, sharp letter to *The Times*, because 'it would be the gravest tragedy if from a misunderstanding of the mind of the British people the world was once again to be plunged into conflict.'

His salient points are already submerged, the will of Hitler has prevailed. In Berlin the name of Anthony Eden is being duly linked up with war and war parties. Adolf Hitler, by sombre indirections, is telling the people of Great Britain that a Cabinet with Eden in it opens once again the abyss of war with Germany. Perhaps the Führer is pressing his advantage too far, for as the year draws to its dark and discreditable close, Eden finds no need to retaliate. Crisis follows on crisis in almost weekly succession, but he merely states and re-states his policy, strong in the knowledge that an ever-increasing number of Conservatives find wisdom in it.

Thus the debate on the Munich Agreement saw Eden particularly subdued, but it marked the occasion for what many well-informed observers regarded as the most dangerous internal revolt since the formation of the National Government. Duff-Cooper's resignation speech caused more than customary disquiet among Members who have become almost case-hardened to these personal statements. The cream of Conservatism, it seems, is with Eden, while Chamberlain is left with the vociferous support of what for all normal occasions would be commonly regarded as the scum of the party, which includes the inevitable whipped majority.

Readers of progressive papers, Opposition Liberals with their largely untapped potentials in the constituencies, and over and above the diverse elements of the politically conscious, the Leviathan of heedless and unattached voters, all find, in varying degrees favour in Eden—for what he has done, for what he must do.

Nemesis apparently awaits those who have for so long succeeded in hiding the domination of a Party under the pseudonym of the slogan National. For on every side are the symptoms of a vast upheaval in British politics—a re-

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alignment of parties, a reorientation of ideas undermining the allegiance of the old accepted party groups.

At present there is no more than manœuvre and secret consultation. There is effervescence but not eruption; but no answer to the riddle of the immediate future would be complete or trustworthy that did not give full weight to a renaissance in British democracy identified in the minds of millions who wait only for the word with the name and the initiative of Anthony Eden.

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